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Religious Rituals in Tayabas

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I. Introduction

A focus on rituals is very important in the study of the cultural heritage of a local community. Apart from serving as opportunities for showcasing the uniqueness of the place to outsiders, rituals, particularly those that emanate from religion, are foundational to the existence and sustainability of a community. Indeed, religious rituals, as classical social science puts it, reflect the values deeply held and shared within the kinship and extended relationships (Durkheim 1912/2001). This is because rituals are generally goal-oriented "fixed sequences of actions" performed by the members of a community and with a "general sense of obligation" (Bowen 2002: 28).

With the desire to showcase religious rituals as part of organized tourism comes, however, the risk of having participants emphasize the form at the cost of the meaningfulness of the practice. As rituals are routinely staged for the consumption of outsiders, a lasting effect on the community may occur at two levels. At one level, how locals perceive their identity as a community may be affected. Losing the meaningfulness of rituals that draw from the long history of the community may cause locals to see their own as inferior to other cultural forms coming from the outside (For a discussion from a development studies angle, see Kelly 1999). At another level, the effect may be on the attitude of locals towards tourists and tourism itself. Cases have been documented about how locals involved in tourism industry have contributed to the commodification of culture or the exploitative showcasing of cultural forms for the sake of profit and without regard to their social contexts.

How religious rituals and their corresponding feasts are carried out in Tayabas offers interesting cases of how heritage, or the uniqueness of the community, may be better preserved. We have seen that while there are rituals celebrated town-wide that invite the participation of locals and tourists alike, there are those in other *barangays* that are exclusively practiced and cherished. Given the nuances they present for a better understanding of community-based heritage tourism in Tayabas, these religious rituals and beliefs deserve affirmation.

The preliminary version of this section was written by the Rituals, Festivals, and Beliefs team composed of graduate and undergraduate students during the Ateneo Cultural Laboratory. Fascinated by the potential it brought as a locally organized ritual, the team gave primary attention to the *Awit sa*

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Dalit (or *Santakrusan*) as practiced in some *barangays* in the *linang*¹, whose sense of exclusivity was affirmed in view of community-based heritage tourism.

As we adopt this train of thought, a clear development is offered in this final report which we see as an expansion of what the students submitted. Since the festivals and beliefs identified during the fieldwork make sense as the religious rituals themselves or part thereof, this section is more aptly called *Religious Rituals in Tayabas*. In particular, we have observed two kinds of religious rituals and their corresponding beliefs, feasts, and festivals available in Tayabas: annual cycle and faith-based. This classification is based on how they are practiced locally. These are rituals that follow the calendar, usually annually celebrated and are dependent on the local government or religious feasts like that of San Isidro which interestingly coincide with the agricultural cycle.

Methodology

The preliminary data for this section come from the fieldwork carried out by the Rituals, Festivals, and Beliefs team in the course of the Ateneo Cultural Laboratory in May 2009. In the preliminary fieldwork, a clear decision was made to focus on the religious rituals as we found them to be substantially different from rituals of socialization such as *mukmukan* and *tagayan*². This decision turned out to be helpful also in coordinating data-gathering with key informants since the team had a very limited time in the area. Data collected mostly came from interviews conducted by the team's graduate and undergraduate students with key informants who have first-hand knowledge about the religious rituals, festivals, and beliefs. These interviewees were identified through snow-balling coordinated by the local Tayabasin team member, Bernadette Padrique of Silangang Katigan (see



¹ *Linang* refers to the farming side of Tayabas.

² *Mukmukan* is a ritual wherein young Tayabasins are involved in the production of *minukmuk* or *nilupak*, cassava pounded using a local version of the mortar and pestle (dubbed *lusong* and *bayo*). The ritual is seen as opportunities for youngsters of both sexes to interact. *Tagayan* refers to the rituals involved in sharing and drinking *lambanog*, a local alcoholic drink fermented from coconut. As it is shared with friends, *tagayan*, like *mukmukan*, is a ritual of socialization.

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photo). In addition to interviews, the team also participated in some rituals including *Santakrusan sa Bayan*, *Awit sa Dalit* (the *linang* version of *Santakrusan*), *Paglilibot ng San Isidro*, and *Hagisan ng Suman*.

This final report draws from additional data gathered after the Ateneo Cultural Laboratory for which we managed to participate in such rituals as *Santakrusan* in another *barangay* (Ibabang Palale) and a healing ritual of *pagsusuob*. To probe and substantiate our initial findings, we have in addition interviewed more informants who have either expertise in or with direct experience of the religious rituals at hand. We have talked to locals who practice, for example, *pagsusuob* and *pambubuga*. We have even managed to interview non-Catholic locals to obtain their views about the religious rituals being practiced in Tayabas.

As we immersed more in the religious heritage of Tayabas, we found ourselves asking more questions. Thankfully, our local informants have gone beyond the ordinary levels of hospitality by preparing food for us and even allowing us to stay at their residences, instances which, true to the spirit of ethnography, have revealed far deeper insights and information. In other instances, they did not only answer our questions but also went out of their way to accompany us around and, when needed, even helped us in taking blood-sucking *limatik* off our legs as we were navigating the foot of Mt. Banahaw to visit *erehiya*. Some of our other local informants have also opened their private collections of *anting-anting*, *oracion*, sacred texts, and very old *kalipino*, an accomplishment that is only possible as relationships with them are deepened by recurring visits.



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In all, we have returned to Tayabas four times (in June, July, and twice in August 2009) and have progressed very extensively. A complete list of research activities done and data gathered including photographs, videos, and audio recordings of interviews for this section is included in the appendix.

Finally, we have also embarked on library work on related literature and documents that provide a picture of pre-Hispanic Tagalog religion. Apart from the Ateneo de Manila's Rizal Library, we have visited the community library of Tayabas. Without intending to replace systematic historical research, this section hopes to unravel continuities and otherwise in terms of the religious life of Tayabasins. We have found this to be most helpful in understanding the uniqueness of *Santakrusan* and the faith-based practices and treatments. It is our hope that these snippets of historical information will serve as reference points for future researchers who may be interested in more academic and in-depth studies on Tayabas.

Organization

The flow of this report begins with a discussion of the annual cycle rituals of *Hagisan ng Suman*, *Paglilibot ng San Isidro*, and the *Santakrusan*. One can argue that these are, to varying degrees, the uniqueness of Tayabas religious heritage. But lest we fail to give due recognition to other rituals such as those involving San Diego and St. Michael the Archangel, we have devoted a section that offers an overview that future researchers or interested entities may further explore.

From here, we shall proceed to the second kind of religious rituals we have gleaned from our fieldwork – faith-based everyday rituals. Introduced parenthetically in the students' preliminary report in May 2009, these are everyday rituals informed by local faith such as those involving *balis* and *erehiya* and folk treatments in the event that one is *nabalis* or *nagalaw*. These faith-based rituals are drawing largely from folk beliefs which, when probed more closely, reveal how they are meant to highlight the importance of relationships with one another and with nature.

We wish to highlight in this final report the strength offered by the ways religious rituals are carried out in terms of community participation and the preservation of heritage. This will draw attention to the existing governance structures and strategies being employed by the local communities we have visited. One very interesting example is the presence of the *bayan-linang* dynamics which reveals community attempts at exclusivity.

The paper ends by drawing attention to concerns related to the preservation of religious heritage in Tayabas, particularly material religion. In response, propositions are offered in light of the opportunities seen in existing community structures.

Finally, a note on the selection of religious rituals is necessary. The traditional definition of religious rituals straightforwardly includes only those marked by special occasions, which we have identified here as the annual cycle rituals (see Bowie 2000). Indeed, besides the very prominent *Hagisan ng Suman* in honor of San Isidro in the *bayan*, we found out that many other saints are also being celebrated (with their respective rituals) in other *barangays* especially in the *linang*³. While it is ideal to cover each of them, feasibility constraints are imminent for us. In addition, we have identified three annual cycle religious rituals that we hope, at the very least, exhibit the richness of the religious heritage of Tayabas: *Hagisan ng Suman*, *Paglilibot ng San Isidro*, and *Santakrusan* or *Awit sa Dalit*.

Our take on rituals, however, is not just with regards to special occasions. As socially shared and established practices, rituals can also take place in the context of more mundane (or everyday) situations. *Tagayan*, for example, even if it is an ordinary practice for Tayabasins has its own ritual to follow as to who distributes the drink and what ought to be done to excuse oneself, failure to do which can be offensive to the group. This approach is known in sociology as ethnomethodology (see Heritage 1984), the study of rules and processes governing social interaction, which are effectively the everyday rituals. In our report, we take into consideration those everyday rituals that are arguably faith-based in the sense that they involve the invoking of spirits or entities whose roots may or may not be necessarily Catholic, which is not surprising given the presence of Tagalog animism prior to the arrival of the Franciscans.

II. Annual Cycle Rituals

Given the prevalence of Catholicism in Tayabas, it is no wonder that the main religious rituals are marked by the feast of saints, in particular of San Isidro. As important markers within the year, these are categorized as religious rituals of confirmation, in that as opposed to rites of passage delineating transitions, they are meant to reiterate the values of the community. Saints' days in the Catholic world generally remind the adherents of the social order and certain modes of conduct (Gudeman 1976).

³ Dizon (2005) takes note of this situation in Lucban, Quezon as well.

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In Tayabas, devotion to San Isidro (see photo), who is patron of farmers across the Philippines, is typically explained by the debt of gratitude locals have for the continuous agricultural produce generated. One of the myths surrounding San Isidro we obtained from the *linang* is about how an angel struck his dry land with a stick resulting in the overflow of water that made his farm blossom with agricultural produce overnight in spite of him not doing anything. This perhaps is the reason why locals think that, in the words of a local informant from the *linang*, "*nagagalit daw ang poon kapag natutuyo ang tubigan*"⁴.



Indeed, the most prominent religious ritual (or festival) celebrated in Tayabas commemorates San Isidro. In the town proper, the *Mayohan* Festival culminates in the *Hagisan ng Suman*, where the image of San Isidro from the Basilica of St. Michael the Archangel is brought around on May 15 every year. On the same day in some *barangays* in the *linang*, on the other hand, locals have their own way of

⁴ This is implicit in the "*Oracion ni San Isidro*" in a very old handwritten collection of *awit*, *kalipino*, and prayers lent to us by *Tatay Melo Rana* of *Munting Bayan*:

Contra sa manga hayop na maninira sa halaman oh hasik na palay at iba pang mang hayop ay magdasal ng limang Sumasampalataya at saca lilibotin ang canyang halamanan o pananim at doon sa apat na casolocalan ay maglilagay ng tiguiguising cros + sa guitna ay isa ring cros + at saca lalayo na at dadasalin ay isang amanamin abaguinoon maria at gloria patre at saca uuiucain ito sa pagbalik, ciam benidecit nobis salvo abitam Jesus + na liliboting ole ang apat na eskina oh casolocalan at saca isonod na sa panitong mga orasyon sa lugar ng tatlong cros + ay gagaw – in ang Santong Vindiciyon ytong mga orasyon.

*Judie Enemiuum ++
Hudie indigsum ++
Hudie Dormiam ++
Hudie in Rekiemisca Tempacein + Amen.*

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commemorating San Isidro, usually in the form of the *Paglilibot* of a *poon* or statue of the saint with people sharing (or *bigayan*) their own *suman*, to be distributed equally afterwards.

Although both commemorate San Isidro and are confirmatory in purpose as religious rituals, the distinction in terms of practice reveals different attitudes towards how the heritage of Tayabas may both be harnessed and preserved. Specifically, we make the case that the rituals involved in the *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* and the *bigayan ng suman* exhibit significant levels of exclusivity that need to be affirmed as efforts in preserving local identity. This, however, is not meant to argue that the *Hagisan ng Suman* festival in the *bayan* is counterproductive. Indeed, while *Hagisan ng Suman* is one of the city's forefront festivals attracting tourists, the sentiment among many of its organizers is that it is first and foremost a celebration of local Tayabasin heritage. That, too, is a sense of heritage that must be affirmed.

Significant levels of exclusivity may also be found in the *Awit sa Dalit* or what locals in some *barangays* in the *linang* call *Santakrusan*. What is interesting about this ritual, however, is that while it is carried out in May, which is why according to an informant it is what *Mayohan* originally referred to, the *Santakrusan* is not directly related to San Isidro. It is first and foremost a ritual revolving around the cross whose indigenous origins may have been supplanted by the Catholic religion. The sense of exclusivity shared by local participants about the ritual shall be discussed and affirmed in this final report in light of community-based heritage tourism.

Hagisan ng Suman during the Mayohan Festival: San Isidro in the Bayan

Perhaps the most prominent of festivals celebrated in Tayabas is the *Mayohan*, taken from the month it is being celebrated. Lasting for ten days leading to the Feast of San Isidro on May 15, the *Mayohan* has been an annual celebration of the city since its inception in 1988 by the local government. With the aim of facilitating a "process of conscious recollection among community members", the *Mayohan* through the years has introduced activities that foster the participation of the 66 *barangays* in Tayabas (Tayabas City Government 2009). Indeed, according to Community Affairs Officer Willie Tomines, *Mayohan* is meant to consolidate the different celebrations that *barangays* would normally carry out independent of each other to thank San Isidro, what *Mayohan* may have originally referred to. Apart from the beauty pageants, talent competitions, competition of *pinayas* or decorated houses, and *tiangge* or shops installed to showcase products from around Tayabas, two of *Mayohan's* most anticipated events are the *Parada ng Baliskog* and the *Hagisan ng Suman*. For its religious character

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exhibiting the way San Isidro is venerated in Tayabas, a special emphasis is given here to *Hagisan ng Suman*⁵.



The *Hagisan ng Suman* is often compared to the Feast of the Black Nazarene in Quiapo because of its pervasively masculine nature; it is often the men who participate in the procession of San Isidro from the Basilica of St. Michael the Archangel to around the town proper. Although tourists are free to join, men from the different *barangays*, many of whom see it as *panata* or devotion, are expected to participate in the event. The act of *Hagisan ng Suman* takes place as soon as the image of San Isidro passes by one's home with multitudes of men attempting to catch *suman*⁶ tossed at them by homeowners from their upper verandas or windows. The *suman*, tied with a couple of others, is especially wrapped for the occasion with a long tail called *tatangnan* using coconut leaves.

Because *suman* is tossed instead of being handed over, the procession can indeed be rowdy, which explains the very minimal participation of women in the crowd. We have seen, for example, how men attempted to climb tall gates just to reach *suman* directly from the second-storey windows.

Whatever one's motivation might be for participating, the prominence of *suman* in the festival is undeniable. It is worth noting that rice cake and its many varieties is prevalent as ritual offering around Southeast Asia – as *canang sari* in Balinese Hinduism, for example. Contextualized meanings must also

⁵ As will be seen in another section, however, the meaningfulness of the *balisbaliskog* as a welcoming arch, even if without any religious undertone, offers a framework to understand the religious rituals in Tayabas.

⁶ In lieu of *suman*, some offer fruits tied to a *pabitin* or what is known locally as *bagakay* made of bamboo which is released to the crowd once the San Isidro passes by (Tayabas City Government 2009).

be taken into consideration. We have consistently gleaned from our many interviewees in both the *bayan* and the *linang* that *suman*, made of glutinous rice, is the best representation of their agricultural labor that needs the blessing of San Isidro. One of the local narratives about San Isidro is that in his time when he was still a farmer he had the intervention of angels in his field in such a way that overnight he had a bountiful harvest. *Suman*, therefore, is in one sense an offering in a transactional ritual that calls for San Isidro's intervention just as he passes by one's home. Indeed, the very act of tossing *suman* in itself evokes bounty just as *palay* or uncooked rice is showered upon a newly married couple as part of the wedding ritual in the Philippines.

But apart from being the best representation of the agricultural character of Tayabas, we suggest that *suman* takes a central role in *Hagisan* for the prestige that it is, given the elaborate process involved in producing *suman*. There are many varieties of *suman* available in Tayabas but generally they are identified according to the wrapping used: *sumang imos* (pandan leaf), *sumang dahon* (banana leaf), and *sumang palaspas ng niyog* (coconut leaf). It is the last that is uniquely used for the *Hagisan* because its *tatangnan* or long tail allows it to be tied to the *bagakay* or to each other usually in 12's or 20's. The firm coconut leaf wrapping, done three times vertically that extends to the *tatangnan*, makes it secure for tossing from the balcony.

In addition, we also found out that preparing the *suman* for *Hagisan* requires meticulous preparations. Those involved, for example, treat *suman* as *busong* or of worth hence not worthy of dropping on the floor and be spoilt. To avoid this, preparation is done on the floor. Taking into consideration the time and effort bound up in rules on how to wrap and cook *suman*, the whole process may in fact be considered a community ritual in itself. Interestingly, however, there is no special recipe being used for this specific *suman* although our informants would speak of adding a little sugar or salt but essentially it is the usual *suman*. The meticulous process involved in its production makes *suman* an offering of prestige.



Apart from the festivity of the procession itself, one explanation for the desire to accumulate as many *suman* as possible is that what one has gathered is believed to be indicative of his harvest or

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income in the coming year. On the part of those who prepare and toss *suman*, the act, as a form of devotion, may be of gratitude for a bountiful year. But looking at *Hagisan* more closely, the act in itself can be said to reflect the idea of abundance afforded by the economic state of the town proper. Hence, while the Feast can be said to be a *panata* or act of devotion to San Isidro at one level, it is also, at another, a clear celebration of abundance. This, as will be explained later, becomes clearer when contrasted to the way the Feast of San Isidro is celebrated in the *linang*.



For all its elaborate and extravagant activities, it is easy to overlook the humble beginnings of the way San Isidro is celebrated in Tayabas. The following account by Cabuyao (1997, 63-64) is instructive:

Interviews with the town's elderly people, reveal that the *Mayohan* of yore is a very simple passage. The procession of the image of San Isidro Labrador, with the catchers trailing after the Saint, is all it takes to celebrate May 15. From this simple affair, young blood injected zest and vigor to the celebration, making *Mayohan* a grandiose display of merrymaking.

This is very consistent with the accounts of Mayor Dondi Alandy Silang, who became mayor first in 1988 when *Mayohan* was formalized with creative artist Orlando Nadres as a festival of the entire municipality. The period prior to 1988 was characterized heavily by the conflict between the military and the New People's Army, forcing many of the residents from the outskirt *barangays* to relocate in the town proper. As a way of reviving the social atmosphere in Tayabas since residents would normally lock their homes as early as 6 pm as a safety precaution given the history of conflict, the *Mayohan* was established with the usual festival activities such as "*pa-amateur*" singing contest and other talent shows to elicit community participation. Since *barangays* in the *linang* had their own versions of *Mayohan* usually in terms of local *baylihan* (dancing) or religious activities in honor of San Isidro, what

the establishment of *Mayohan* intended to do also was pull together different *barangay* celebrations. Its timing was considered strategic since during the summer, students and relatives from other places are expected to be in town. It was in this context that *Hagisan ng Suman* became one of the highlights as a *Mayohan* activity. From being a traditional and very local feast that was a *panata* for many of its participants for many years prior to *Mayohan*'s institutionalization, the *Hagisan ng Suman* in honor of San Isidro became highlighted. What needs to be emphasized here is the consciousness on the part of the organizers that *Mayohan* Festival is carried out in the spirit of celebrating community. The attention that it gets from outsider tourists is secondary.

This grand transformation of *Mayohan*, with all its added and heightened festive activities, seems to be, according to Dizon (2005), in line with how the other San Isidro festivals from around Quezon province (notably in Lucban and Sariaya) emerged to be major tourist attractions as well in the 20th century. Dizon (2005) suggests, for example, that the Feast of San Isidro in Lucban (before it became *Pahiyas* Festival) was in the early 20th century a simple gathering of *barrio* residents to thank San Isidro for protecting them – and without, ironically, any hint of thanksgiving for the agricultural harvest. Given changes introduced during the American period, the collapse of the weaving industry, and the emphasis on tourism during the Marcos administration, San Isidro Festival became more elaborate turning out to be the *Pahiyas* Festival that it is today. The similar development of San Isidro festivities in Sariaya is explained by the prosperity of the place during the glorious years of 1913 – 1934 when copra prices soared in the international market (Dizon 2005).

Paglilibot ng San Isidro: San Isidro in the Linang

Dizon (2005) documents that in Lucban, prior to the rise of *Pahiyas* Festival as its foremost tourist attraction in the 20th century, each *barangay* (or *barrio*) had its own patron saint celebrated rather simply – with only a community picnic, for example. And San Isidro was only one of them. In some *barangays* in the *linang* side of Tayabas, the feast of San Isidro remains to be celebrated that, in a manner that resonates with the simplicity of *barrio* feasts in Lucban⁷, is in sharp contrast to the lavish celebrations in the *bayan* during the *Mayohan*. This section draws from our fieldwork with the *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* in *Barangay* Silangang Katigan in the morning of May 15. We have also

⁷ Lucban is the municipality in the immediate north of Tayabas. Apart from being Tagalog, Lucban and Tayabas share a common history as former areas of administration and evangelization by the Franciscans (see Tormo Sanz 1971). The cultural similarities between the two are arguably not accidental.

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encountered accounts about *Paglilibot* in other *barangays* like Alitao, details of which are also interjected here as points for comparison. The ritual in other *barangays* is called *libutan*, *San Isidrohan*, and even *Mayohan*⁸.

The *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* in Silangang Katigan, which is simply the procession of the *poon* around the *barangay*, began with a call for participation signaled by the bell in the *barangay's* local chapel. Within minutes, at least 30 residents were already gathered, with a fair balance between both genders. From the onset, however, it was quite evident that women were taking the lead in this ritual since they led the prayer and prepared the *poon*. Indeed, we realized in a follow up interview that even the organization that oversaw the preparation of this feast, *Munting Sambayanang Kristiyano* (MSK), is composed of only women⁹.



Outside the chapel were the men expected to bear the *usungan* or carrier on which the *poon* was firmly set. Two men regularly replaced by the others along the way would carry on both ends the *usungan* that is nicely decorated with coconut and palm leaves (see photo). Following them were the community members that increased in number as they moved from one house to another, with residents joining in the procession.

⁸ Other *barangays* celebrating *Paglilibot* include Ilasan, Camaysa, Lansonisa, Dapdap, Lakawan, and Ipilan. The list is not exhaustive.

⁹ In contrast, the main organizers in Alitao are elected officials of the *barangay* council.

Since it required that households in the entire farming *barangay* be visited, the ritual was effectively described as act of penitence. At first we expected that the procession would employ certain prescribed prayers but none was recited except at the start. Perhaps the act in itself was the penitence. In an indication of how vast the land is, it took us at least two hours to traverse the grids of farm and small dikes in order to reach far-flung houses in the *barangay*. At times houses were next to each other but in a few instances only one or two houses were within the vicinity.

Embedded in the ritual was the act of offering *suman*. As the statue carried around and followed by the faithful stops at a house, the resident comes out offering *suman* or whatever he or she might be willing to such as vegetables. Other houses may participate by showering coins mostly chased by kids. According to a respondent we interviewed in another *barangay*, the coins are not to be spent as they offer good luck for the year.



After the *Paglilibot*, all the *suman* and other perishables collected are brought together at the *barangay* hall where they are partitioned equally among all the participants (see photo). Interestingly, even we as outsiders were provided a plastic bag full of *suman*, vegetables, and snacks. In time for lunch, the *pansit* and some vegetables and fruits received were all prepared for a feast.

In the event that some houses did not wish to participate, usually because of religious difference, the statue would still pass by their place as a sign of respect. After three hours, we visited roughly 70 households, not very far from the official population of 84 (NSO-Quezon 2007). Given the *barangay*'s small population, the participation by about 70 or so individuals – with both young and old alike - by the end of the procession was significant.

History

Tracing the history of religious rituals is in itself a complicated task mainly because they are by and large orally passed. Historical documents are scanty; most that are available are anecdotal. The same can be said of tracing the history of *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* but we were fortunate to have been

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referred to *Tatay* Isabelo Romero, 73, recognized to be an authority on the ritual since he initiated it in Silangang Katigan. By his own account, *Tatay* Isabelo explains that the *Paglilibot* in the *barangay* was in fact adopted in the 1970s from the prominent *Hagisan ng Suman* in the *bayan* as an attempt to enliven the community. Prior to this, there was no religious celebration at the *barangay* level. Although the reason for this in Silangang Katigan is not clear, the experience in Alitao may shed light where many of the local residents left for the *bayan* at the height of the State's tension with the New People's Army (NPA). Alitao's *Barangay* Captain, Jose Sombrero, points out that *San Isidrohan* was introduced as agricultural work was being revived by locals around the same time that NPA strength was waning in the area. The ritual in this case showcased the resiliency of the community.

Tatay Isabelo Romero, who hails from Calumpang before moving to Silangang Katigan after marrying a local, further explains that in the time of his ancestors each household would have its own saint to whom the family was devoted. Devotion to the saint therefore was a household affair to which neighbors were invited during novena sessions in celebration of the saint's feast. This supposed diversity of available saints within the community provides an alternative picture of religiosity before San Isidro became prominent. Indeed, this is in contrast to Dizon's (2005) suggestion that each *barangay* in Lucban already had its own particular saint, implying a unified devotion. It is possible that ownership of a *poon* by a family in Tayabas indicated a respected status within the community not just in terms of the divine providence it was supposed to bring. This is because a prayer session, as *Tatay* Isabelo himself admits, would normally have a feast after, hence showcasing the economic ability of the family. This also stands out against other traditional religious celebrations in which each of the member of the community has economic investments (see Turner and Seriff 1987).



In addition, worth noting here is that this household *panata* jives with the importance of the home as a sacred space in pre-Hispanic Filipino religiosity. Drawing from Fray Plasencia's accounts in the 16th century, Tormo Sanz (1971) sees the importance of the home in the worship life of the community. This will receive greater emphasis in the section on the *Awit sa Dalit* or *Santakrusan*, a ritual that takes place in the home.

To ensure the continuity of the family *panata* (and perhaps status as well), the *poon* was passed on from one generation to the next. This is, of course, unless a religious conversion takes place,

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which necessitates the removal of Catholic icons. We have noticed, for example, that during *Paglilibot*, a few households did not participate because they were Jehovah's Witnesses. This, according to *Tatay* Isabelo Romero, is the reason why his is the last remaining original *poon* in the community, which we have been shown (see photo). This was the same *poon* originally used for *Paglilibot* before it was replaced by the newer one housed in the community chapel built in the early 1990s.

Noteworthy too is that in Alitao, the *libutan* uses a painting of San Isidro instead of a statue. *Tatay* Tome Sombrero, 76, narrates that the painting was owned by a *propetario* or one who owned vast land in Tayabas. He recounts that when he was young the *propetario* would gather his tenants which included him to celebrate San Isidro as thanksgiving for the *anihan* or harvest. After land reform, the painting was passed down to one of the tenants and is now being used for *libutan* in Alitao. The celebration that used to be just among the *propetario* and his tenants was adopted by the entire *barangay*. The picture below includes *Tatay* Elias Sombrero who carries the painting during the annual *libutan* and *Nanay* Lucia Mabuting, its current caretaker.



In Silangang Katigan, changes to the rituals have been observed through the years, as Victoria Padrique, mother of our local team member, explains to us. She recounts how she grew up with it, which converges with the accounts of *Tatay* Isabelo. If today prayer is conducted only at the start of the procession in the chapel, she points out that a novena to San Isidro used to be sung throughout, with participants responding to each other.

Moreover, even the act of *bigayan ng suman* replaced the original practice of *hagisan*, which again coincides with *Tatay Isabelo's* claim that the ritual was adopted from the *bayan's* celebration. Like in the *bayan*, tossing signifies blessing and progress. However, the practice was changed (in time with the community chapel's construction) since it became increasingly obvious that the distribution of *suman* was inequitable in favor of younger and agile participants. Apart from this, the change may be seen also in terms of the economic conditions in the *linang* where wastage (as when somebody accidentally steps on *suman*) is unnecessary and competition with each other is not tolerable.

The latter consideration is particularly important given the arrangement of *turnohan*, the expectation that a farmer helps out in the labor needs of another without financial remuneration. The idea that labor is shared is also in conflict with the typical crop-sharing system (*riwihan*) between land owner and farmer, with the latter seeing through the agricultural process from soil preparation (*linas*) to harvest (*ani*). Other possible farming arrangements include *hunusan* (as when the land owner hires a *mang-aani* (harvester) as needed) and usufruct (as when a farmer buys the rights to make use of the farm, colloquially *tubigan*). Whichever the arrangement, land ownership is not typically with the farmer, which is in deep contrast to the pre-Hispanic land arrangement among Tagalog locals. According to Scott (1999: 229), "arable land, woodlands, and water sources occupied by a *bayan* were considered to be communal resources...Swidden rights were the same as in the rest of the archipelago: whoever opened a hillside plot had the right to the crops but not to the land".

Given this social context, the change in the way the ritual is done, therefore, besides being a ritual that brings the community together, may be seen as a ritual of rebellion that contests, even if unconsciously, the feudal and profit-oriented character of land ownership. In anthropology, a ritual of rebellion takes place "when ordinary social relations are turned upside down" (Bowen 2002: 30). This goes to show that even if merely copied from the *bayan*, the simple ritual that is *Paglilibot* has evolved itself not just in terms of how it is practiced but also in terms of its meaning, thus reflecting the social condition and perhaps aspirations of the *taga-linang*. It is for this reason, too, that the ritual becomes an outlet for the hardship involved in farming, with participants highlighting the feeling of *communitas* and satisfaction for doing it together.

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An analysis like this must not be immediately applied to *Paglilibot* in other *barangays*. The local context and meanings attached to the ritual, even if it is the same and in the same province, must be taken into consideration. In Alitao, for example, the organizers are the local *barangay* council and the farmers own the land they cultivate acquired through land reform. In fact, *Barangay* Captain Jose Sombrero points out that San Isidro replaced *Santakrusan* in 1978 because apart from the demise of *Santakrusan* experts, the locals did not feel “*na may patutunguhan ang Santakrusan. Ipinalit namin ang San Isidrohan dahil kami ay mga magsasaka*”. The ritual, therefore, is primarily a petition for good harvest in the agricultural cycle since it is planting season in May. The following photo shows the all-male *barangay* council at the *bahay-nayon* of Alitao.



In addition, the ritual brings together members of the community – both young and old – but in a way that is more festive and affluent than *Paglilibot* in Silangang Katigan. In Alitao, the celebration ends with a grand banquet in the *bahay-nayon*. In the hope of making celebration the equivalent of *barangay* fiesta, the cost is shared among assigned households. At night, *hermanitos* and *hermanitas* or the younger coordinators lead the community in dancing. It is interesting to note that before the *libutan* itself, the community prays the novena to San Isidro for nine days, a practice absent in Silangang Katigan. The grand banquet, the inclusion of dancing and *hermanitos* and *hermanitas*, and the novena are all modifications to the ritual that in fact draw from the basic form of *Santakrusan* (see next section), a point admitted by the *barangay* captain himself. Very interesting to note, too, is that when land reform was implemented and the painting of San Isidro used to celebrate anihan in Alitao was passed down to a tenant, San Isidro was adopted as the patron saint of the entire *barangay*. This goes to show that indeed religious rituals, even if certain religious meanings are retained such as seeking blessing for the planting season, can be modified by its practitioners according to historical exigencies and social condition. After all, like the ritual in Silangang Katigan, *libutan* in Alitao was merely adopted from the *bayan* and is hence subject to the ways and means of the locals. As Dizon (2005: 1) rightly points out:

Rituals are by definition repetitive. They provide stability in times of crisis and change. But rituals themselves are not static. They are not beyond the bounds of history. Different practices may alter the form and content of rituals. Different contexts may attach different meanings to rituals.

Tayabas Santakrusan

In many provinces in the Philippines, the *Santakrusan* in the *bayan* stands true to its nature of being grandiose and elaborate. By parading around town young ladies with escorts to represent Biblical characters and different titles of the Holy Virgin, the *Santakrusan*, or known as *Flores de Mayo* in Tayabas, makes good in its purpose of display towards attracting attention from both locals and outsiders. Faithfully following its original narrative, the *Santakrusan*, holy cross in its literal translation, is a ritual depicting the search for the cross of Christ.

In some *barangays* in the *linang*, however, we have been met with another form of *Santakrusan*, which the locals sometimes call *Awit sa Dalit*. From this report's section on music, *awit*

and *dalit* are musical terminologies in Tayabas. Usually carried out by the local residents in the *linang*, the *Awit sa Dalit* provides a simpler counterpart of the *Flores de Mayo*. Apart from the lack of display, this *Tayabas Santakrusan* differs too in terms of practice and the roles taking part in it. Mainly a ritual of prayer made in front of a cross, the narrative employed speaks of the cross of Christ already found after a long journey, and given its symbolic location in the ritual, the cross is sheltered within the home of the participating family. In the words of Yolanda Amparo, a local participant in Lakawan, "*Ang Awit [sa Dalit] ang nagbibigay-buhay sa kasaysayan ng Krus ni Hesus na nagligtas sa atin sa ating mga kasalanan*".

From our interviews with locals, we understand that variations, especially in terms of the text and practices adopted, are possible in other *barangays* in Tayabas. We are very pleased, nevertheless, to note that Queaño (1985) has undertaken the commendable job of compiling *kalipino* or ritual manuscripts from various elders, from which he has constructed a comprehensive narrative and picture of *Santakrusan*. This complements our analysis here, mainly drawn from interviews and participant observations in Lakawan and Ibabang Palale, among many other *barangays*. An account from the culminating night called the *katapusanan* or *selebra* will be offered as well.

Generally, as we have compared our notes from other *barangays*, the *Santakrusan* is similar to other novenas in that it is conducted for nine days, the last of which is more elaborate than the previous. But instead of merely reciting the prayer, the *mamumuno* and the participants or *mamumuga* sing the prayer in a repetitive tone, set in correspondence to each other. This correspondence, apparently, is one of the traditional notions of Tayabasin *awitan*. As it is done in front of a cross made of stone, bamboo, or banana stalk found in the yards of some houses in the *barangay*, the ritual recounts the tale surrounding the cross of Christ and its discovery. Queaño's (1985) poetic analysis of the narratives reveals that there are two plots employed in the ritual: one for the first eight days and another for the *katapusanan*. Throughout this discussion, snippets of the *kalipino* as compiled by Queaño (1985) will be quoted¹⁰.

The ceremony proper for the first eight days proceeds in the following order (p. 45):

1. *Pananawagan* (Invocation)

¹⁰ Queaño (1985) has transcribed all the *kalipino* he gathered, attached as appendix to his thesis. To have an idea of its length, if all *kalipino* is recited as was done during competitions among *mamumuno* and singers, it would literally take at least 24 hours. We have also managed to borrow *kalipino* from locals which may be analyzed independently once photoduplicated. They need careful handling.

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2. *Pagbibigay-galang sa maybahay* (paying respects to the owner of the house)
3. *Pagpupuri sa krus* (singing hymns of praise to the cross)
4. *Dasal* (prayers to the Holy Cross)
5. *Pamamaalam* (leave-taking)

As the students during the Ateneo Cultural Labroatory have observed, the ritual begins with a *hermana* or host inviting the singers to come and perform the ritual in his yard. Once this is done the participants proceed from house to house on the eve of May 3 until the 9th day. The date does not have to be specific, although in keeping with tradition, it does not begin prior to May 3, the feast of the Holy Cross. The ritual of prayer begins from the gate of the house with the participants singing in admiration of the house and asking permission to enter in order to start the ceremony. From the *kalipino* as quoted by Queaño (1985: 49):

Mantacoy dito sa may bahay

Sa atin sinasapitan

Canya nga at may bacoran

At may puirtong matibay

Ay canino cayang bahay

Itong ating sinapitan

Halina at acoy samahan

At nang ating maalaman

Diwang itoy dapat mandin

Ng bayan ng Herosalim

Dito rao inihabilin

Ang santa cros giliw

The singers will then approach the cross, prepare a mat before it for them to kneel on, and start singing a prayer which will take at least an hour. What follows is deemed to be the climax of the

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narrative, the discovery of the cross in this home, whose very mundane yard is imagined to be a holy land (p. 52):

O poong cros na mahal
Ganda ng lagay mo riyang
Nasa tabi ca ng harapan
At doyohan nitong bahay

O poong cros na santo
Ganda bagang lagay mo
May pahayas cat may simbo
May lohorang naakto

They will then pack up after praying to the cross and will enter the house of the *hermana* where a different novena will be prayed. After this, the activity is then closed and the people are invited by the *hermana* for a small feast which may be dinner or snack. From here the people involved will, ideally, proceed to the next house and repeat the same process all over again. According to respondents and practitioners of the said ritual, the number of houses they visit used to range from seven to nine in one night. However, at present, and as we saw, only one house was visited. Respondents say that lack of resources, time, and participation is to blame for such. On the last day, the ritual is ended with a Mass in honor of their patron saint, San Isidro Labrador, which in this case is an interesting inclusion.

In contrast, the *katapusanan* or *selebra* on the ninth day is decidedly longer and more elaborate since it involves not just mere singing but also dancing and festivity. The event is expected to last for 24 hours starting in the late afternoon. What we have observed, in any case, lasted for more than 12 hours. While the first eight days saw participants moving (ideally but dependent on community agreement) from one house to another, the *katapusanan* is celebrated in just one place, which could be the *barangay* hall. As the account below shows, the ritual necessitates the use of other things since there are many layers to the story which, quite intriguingly, begins with the very seed of the tree out of which the cross would be made. Following Queaño's (1985) work again, the plot of *katapusanan* is as follows although it is not often followed strictly:

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1. The Origin of the Holy Tree (Or the Seed from which the Holy Tree was Conceived)
2. Junta Trinitario (Or the Council of the Holy Trinity)
3. The Holy Tree
4. The Tree in Paradise and the Adam and Eve Story
5. David and Solomon
6. Solomon and Sheba
7. The *Santakrusan* Story about the Sufferings, Death, and Resurrection of Jesus
8. Resurrection and Ascension: The Story of the Cruz de Vandra and How it Differs from the Cross of the Crucified Christ
9. The Quest of the Holy Cross: The Story of Queen Helene and Emperor Constantine

What follows is an account of *katapusanan* in Ibabang Palale in June 2009 as witnessed by Paolo Montano and Emily Roque, researchers of the Ateneo Cultural Laboratory.

The *katapusanan*, the culmination of the *Santakrusan* has already begun when we arrived in Ibabang Palale, one of the sixty-six *barangays* of Tayabas, Quezon. It was past seven in the evening and people were gathered in front of a baluarte, narrating the story of finding Christ's cross in song. According to our informants, they started at past three in the afternoon of the same day. We settled in the Saberola family's residence, and were welcomed with great hospitality (to describe the way we were received as such is an understatement). After dinner, around past nine, we decided to join the ritual participants to observe and to ask questions if circumstances would permit it. We were accompanied by Mrs. Jacinta Saberola (a.k.a. Ka Inta) when we headed to where the ritual was taking place: near the church, which was only a few steps from the Saberola residence. While on the way, Ka Inta briefed us with the sequence of the whole ritual. It also seemed that she had already informed the other locals about our identities, along with our intentions for going there, and thus were immediately welcomed to join in the *katapusanan*. Seats were offered to us as soon as we arrived; we were reluctant to accept the offer since we knew that we would be taking their places. Nonetheless, we obliged, so as to acknowledge their hospitality.

When we were seated, we noticed that they had already moved forward to another baluarte. Ka Inta explained that there are actually three of these,



and the people would chant in front of each one—"Magpupuri ang mga tao sa harap ng bawat baluarte". Apparently, each *baluarte* has three crosses, and a *papuri* was sung for every cross. After a few hours of chanting, they moved on, carrying their chairs with them, to the third and the last of these *baluartes*, chanting the same melody all throughout, but with the song text being different. After which, some of the locals proceeded, but we, along with the others were offered chicken *sopas* prepared by the *kabisilya*, along with some of the local participants. To put it in another way, some took a break while the others proceeded with the *katapusanan*. This happened before midnight, around 11:30 in the evening.

The next part of the ritual took place in front of the *balon*. The said term corresponds to "water well" in English, but to my surprise, there was none in sight. However, these were only represented by three glass jars (garapon would probably be a more correct term to use; they're actually plastic cups since, again, the *kabesilyas* were said to be "lazy" this year as remarked by the elders) containing water and flowers. Similar to the *baluarte*, there were three of these, and people chanted in front of each *balon*. As we moved from one *balon* to another, we eventually reached the *kubol*—an arched structure resembling a cave though made of ferns—where the three crosses are located. Covering the crosses are three colored



curtains (white, black and red). After chanting, the first curtain is removed, revealing the second curtain. The chanting continues until the final curtain is raised, and the crosses are revealed. As explained by the locals, the curtains, having different colors, represent the layers of soil; as such this part of the ritual represented the unearthing of the cross.

After the cross was "unearthed" at about 1 in the morning, the participants began singing in a rhythm different from the chanting. Two old women rose from their seats to dance in front of the cross. These dancers held hats in their hands, swinging them from side to side as they moved. Once the first dancers finished, they walked towards the rest of the crowds, handing over their hats to the next set of dancers. The dancing took quite a long time, more or less than thirty minutes. Old women danced first, followed by men and some young people. They danced in pairs or in threes. Others ran as far as outside the church yard when the hat was being given to them as they seemed shy of dancing in front of other people. According to *Nanay Siding*, one of the singers, the dancing meant giving tribute to the crosses. It is important then that in dancing, one's back should never be turned even when ending one's dance. The dancing ends with a middle aged man. The crowd turned from festive to solemn, as the next part begins.

After this, everybody settled in their seats and resumed their chanting. The next phase of the ritual was the chanting of the estacion—the fourteen stations of the cross (stations are represented by bamboo-made crosses bigger than the crosses in the kubol). Since the kabesilya was "tamad" (according to elders), they were short of fourteen crosses that they had to move the crosses to fill in missing stations. With each station, a candle was being lit.

The ritual ended at 5 am, 14 hours later. The ritual culminated inside the church, where another set of prayer and novena was conducted.

Probing the Anthropological Meaning and Roots

The religious character of the ritual is well internalized by many of its participants. According to another informant, it does not even matter if the cross that they pray to is made of stone or bamboo, although very old stone crosses played a prominent role in the past according to some interviewees. In

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recent years, practice has altogether stopped in some *barangays* leaving precious old stone crosses stolen or sold, if not used at all, an example of which we have seen in another *barangay* (see photo).



The preservation of both the old stone crosses and the ritual itself is arguably contingent on the effective cultural transmission across the generations. The same informant tells us that as long as faith in the story of the cross that saved mankind is present in them the ritual will still be important to them. Clearly then, *Awit sa Dalit* is a ritual that effectively brings together members of the community in order to share not just the food in the after-ritual feast that marks the relationships but also to reconsider the frailty of humanity, most deeply held in an agricultural setting reliant on the forces of nature. This seems to be the assurance offered by the cross found – and sheltered – within the home.

Religious as it may be or even a socializing activity for many locals, Queaño (1985) points to two different conclusions based on his literary and socio-historical analysis of the *Santakrusan* text. Quite straightforwardly, he first argues that it “belongs among the traditional religious poetry and drama forms of early history” in Tayabas (p. vi). Secondly, it is precisely the availability of this structure that was used by Spanish colonizers “to exploit and enslave the people” (p. vi), just as how they used *Komedyas* and the *Senakulo*.

The latter point is particularly worth exploring further. To an outsider, the elaborate and decided devotion to the cross is notable as it, first and foremost, does not have any direct relationship to the economic condition of the place. It is logical, in contrast, to see San Isidro’s prominence in an agricultural setting or San Diego’s during the period of an epidemic. Based on our research, we propose that there are several ways, all related to each other, to account for this cultural fixation on the cross.

For one, the cross, especially in its stone form, seems to be an extension of the pre-Hispanic worship of stone as they were believed to be inhabited by spirits. This is perhaps why until today, locals can still identify what they call as *buhay na bato*. In his account from the 16th century, Spanish friar Pedro Chirino (1969: 298) makes a note about this worship of nature, in which the stone is a prominent figure:

They adored even stones, rocks, reefs and cliffs along the riverbanks or the seashore, and offered them something when passing by, by approaching the place and elevating their offering on top of the stone or rock-shelf. In the river of Manila I many times saw a rock that for many years had been an idol of these miserable people.

In an island in Mindanao, Chirino (1969) has also seen a big rock formation which sailors would shoot hard enough for the arrows to embed as an act of worship for their safe passage in the area. Ribadeneira (1971: 343) further elucidates by pointing out that *anitos* or spirits of ancestors and relatives are "symbolically represented in very crude forms or objects, sometimes by a simple block or mound of stone, without any delineation of the human figure".

In many accounts, the cross was used to counter the animism among natives. Chirino (1969: 298) continues that the "Fathers of St. Augustine...with holy zeal broke it [stone and rock worshiped] into pieces and set up a cross in its place". The Franciscans in the Tagalog region used the cross as a powerful image as well. Drawing from Ribadeneira, Tormo Sanz (1971) mentions that as part of their evangelization, the friars planted crosses in the towns they have visited, thus raising consciousness and encouraging its veneration.

Such veneration is closely related to Queaño's (1985) argument about the *Santakrusan* as a method by which the locals were enslaved. More than anything else, the narratives employed about the cross in the *kalipino* largely highlight the suffering attached to it and the sacrifices required as part of its veneration. The *kalipino*, for example, whose section on Solomon's Temple bears resemblances to the construction of churches in Tayabas. Queaño (1985: 157) thus concludes that the *Santakrusan* and its powerful images of suffering and devotion "must have instilled in the people's minds a habit of subservience and complacency which proved difficult to break even at present". Noteworthy to consider too in the deepening of this mortified attitude is the Franciscan spirituality of "Minority", expressed in poverty and humility. To reconsider Queaño's (1985) argument in a milder fashion, the

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inclination for poverty and humility among the Franciscans has led to the effective conversion and control of the Tagalog native.

Before ending this section, three elements of *Santakrusan* are also worth noting because they may have continuities with folk religion: singing, dancing, and the centrality of the home.

Singing as a religious act appears to have been part of pre-Hispanic worship. Drawing from Father Plasencia, considered one of the most important friars in the rise of Lucban and many other *pueblos*, Martinez (1999: 50) notes that among natives, worship of *anito* involved "*matatalinhagang awitin*" led by the *katalonan* to which the rest would respond by singing as well. Quoting Fr. Francisco de Santa Ines, Tormo Sanz (1971: 7) argues that

Those poetical songs were the means of oral transmission of their ancestral beliefs, which, "they knew by memory, and used to repeat them in their travel by the sea following the motion of the oar, also during their enjoyments, festivities and funeral gatherings, and in their work...In these songs they sang the fabulous genealogies [sic] and the great deeds of their gods..."

Moreover, one of the definitive markers of an *awit*, according to Manuel (1958), is that it is *danced*. Like singing, dancing was also part of religious celebrations in honor of *anitos*. This is very consistent with the observations made in our account above about being careful not to turn the back to the cross while dancing even if making an exit already.

But equally significant to consider is that pre-Hispanic worship took place in a house converted into a temple calle *sibi* (Tormo Sanz 1971: 6). We have seen in the annual cycle rituals, not just the *Santakrusan*, that homes are visited for religious purposes. It is possible that the Tayabas pride for clean houses, especially the floor, draws from the sanctity of the home. We have heard, time and again, for example, locals apologizing for their floor not being clean enough when there is visibly nothing to worry about for us outsiders. And of course, there is the water receptacle outside where everyone entering the home is expected to wash their feet thoroughly.

Other Religious Rituals, Saints, and Folk Beliefs in Tayabas

We have seen in Tayabas that, based on accounts of locals, devotion to saints has been very much diverse for a long time even within the *barangay*, a reality that is common even in other parts of

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Quezon (see Dizon 2005). Families, especially prominent ones, would have their own image or *poon* and carry out celebrations on their respective feasts.

Such diversity of saints in Tayabas Catholicism is also evident even within the Basilica of St. Michael the Archangel. A quick survey of icons within the church would include St. Francis (since the Basilica was constructed by Franciscans), St. Dominic, St. Raphael, St. Gabriel, Our Lady of Carmen, Our Lady of Angels, San Diego de Alcala, St. Michael the Archangel, and St. Jude Thaddeus. The latter five are also present in a prayer garden adjacent to the altar, where specific prayers to each of them are visible for the faithful to follow. In a chance interview with Felicita Padin, 55, an MSK officer from Gitnang Lawigue, we also found out that *dalit* or sung prayers to San Diego, San Roque, San Isidro, St. Michael the Archangel, and the Virgin Mary are being collectively practiced in her *barangay* as part of the celebration of the feast of San Diego in August.

Abila, Pataunia, and Redor (1987) rightly point out that the successful entry of so many saints in Tayabas was because of the inherent religiosity of the locals. We qualify however that such religiosity emanated from the diverse deities that pre-Hispanic Tagalogs believed in. As *Bathala Maykapal* or the Supreme Creator was highly inaccessible and oblivious to their daily affairs, locals resorted to lesser gods or deities in the form of *anitos* (or deified ancestors mediating between them and *Bathala*)¹¹. In addition,

every village, cave, mountain, body of water, large and old tree, big rock and so on, had its individual resident god or spirit. There were good gods and spirits who helped the natives in their life and activities like farming, fishing, and hunting, and there were also malevolent gods or evil spirits, whose work was to harm man or bring down misfortune on him (Rosales, 1984: 3)

Anitos or lesser gods were given offerings and sacrifices to act as mediating entities to seek the favor of *Bathala* to grow rice, for example. Indeed, it is this religiosity of pre-Hispanic Tagalog which involved petitioning *anitos* or spirits to protect their interests that may have found its way into the pantheon of saints offered by Catholicism. The diversity of saints in Tayabas is arguably the result of the intense Christianization process carried out by the Franciscans during the Spanish era. This coincided

¹¹ It is worth noting that according to Manuel's (1951, 33) lexicographic study of Tayabas Tagalog, *anito* refers to "1. *Matandang kaugalian na sinusunod sa mga gawain at pamumuhay ng mga tao*...2. *Paniwala*...3. *Pamahiin*".

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with the construction of satellite churches or *visita* in the area such as Ermita de San Diego de Alcala in Munting Bayan and the Ermita de Nuestra Senora de Angustias, with the latter remaining today (see Abila, Pataunia, and Redor 1987 and Queaño 1985).

One notable saint is San Diego de Alcala, considered to be the secondary saint of Tayabas, next to St. Michael the Archangel. The influence of San Diego must have been so wide that for a long time prior to the 1960s, his feast on November 12 was celebrated as town fiesta.

The prominence of San Diego de Alcala, patron of the sick, must be drawing from a long history of illness in Tayabas. Gleaning from anonymous historical records, Queaño (1985) details the succession of epidemics or *salot* that struck Tayabas such as smallpox, rabies, and an anonymous plague. The smallpox epidemic occurred at least eight times in the years 1705, 1719, 1727, 1730, 1741, 1763, 1773, and 1808. And in 1755, a *salot* took the lives of 900 individuals in Tayabas, during the time of parish priest Fr. Jose de la Trinidad y Guarisin (see also Abila, Pataunia, and Redor 1987).

Perhaps he is no longer as prominent as he was but certain following is still retained. Until today many Tayabasins still seek the intercession of San Diego for the healing of their children, most especially. At the *retablo* of San Diego in the Basilica, for example, it is not surprising to be seeing children's clothes left there after a novena or prayer made to him (see photo). This practice, according to Ka Torio Abesamis, 55, former staff in the municipal office, is a remnant of a more elaborate devotion to San Diego in which on a Saturday, parents attend mass with their children and offer him novena. At the end of this pious act, the child on petition will change into a new set of clothes soaked in *santol*-boiled water. Necias Pataunia of the municipal office explains that the act of wearing brown-stained clothes symbolized the Franciscan habit worn by San Diego himself. The old clothes left there may in fact be an offering to the *poon*.



In addition to this, Ka Torio also mentions an old practice of praying the novena to San Diego within the *barangay* that led to his feast on November 12. *San Diegohan*, as it was known, was being sung for nine days at a designated place, usually the *bahay-nayon*. Interestingly, the Ateneo de Manila University

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Rizal Library has an archive of a novena to San Diego made by a Tayabasin faithful in 1823, which is found in this report's database. The *antifona* of the novena highlights the healing character of San Diego:

Ang mga kababalaghang gawa ng katawan ni San Diego, ay ang mga bingi ay nakaringig, ang mga pipi ay nakapangusap, ang mga masasaktin ay gumagaling, ang mga demonio'y pumapanaw sa mga katawan ng taong pinamamahayan, at ang mga may sakit na malubhang inaabot na ng kamatayan, ay pinagsasaulan ng buhay.

The fact that this 1823 novena was organized by a local Tayabasin and had the ecclesiastical approval as shown on its title page must have meant that it was indeed popularly practiced. Without doubt, a more in-depth historical research about the devotion to San Diego de Alcala is called for as this will reveal deeper insights about Tayabasin religiosity. We propose two possibilities.

For one, it may be that in an agricultural setting that allowed for only one cycle of planting and harvesting, *San Diegohan* may have completed the calendar. At the start of the planting season in May, San Isidrohan would be a petition for a good harvest. And towards the end of the year, *San Diegohan* may have been employed to seek the protection of the harvest (even if the saint was for healing primarily)¹². Admittedly, this may also be the case for other feasts traditionally celebrated towards the end of the year.

Two, what is most interesting about the novena to San Diego is that a significant portion of it is devoted to exhortations about the right behavior expected of genuine Catholics. For its entire duration, each day's session begins with *pagninilay* or meditation on such virtues as humility, fear of God, and hope, all supposedly reflected in the life of San Diego. Popular novenas such as this must have been used to shape consciousness and piety as part of the Christianization process. Tiongson (1975), for one, argues that the *sinakulo*¹³, or play about Christ's suffering, was meant to focus the attention of those who practice it on the afterlife, thus neglecting existing life conditions. The same is also evident in the exhortation on the virtue of faithfulness, for example, on the third day of the novena to San Diego (Anonymous 1823: 13):

¹² In the current setup in Tayabas, however, two cycles of planning and harvesting are already possible.

¹³ Tiongson (1975) spells it in this way.

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Marami ang nagsasabing sumasampalataya sa Dios, nguni't itinatakwil ng mga gawang nila. Wala ni habas ng Pananampalataya, ang mga taong nanasok sa simbahan na di man gumagalang sa Santisimo Sacramento, o kaya walang pagiingat kamunti mang magsalitaan sa loob ng bahay ng Dios. Wala rin naming taglay na Pananampalataya ang mga babaeng iyan na nagdadamit o sa ibang sabi'y hinuhubaran na ng damit ang katawan na nakapaguudyok sa pagkakasala matanao lamang.

Prayers like this, along with the *Sinakulo*, must have complemented the more direct catechetical instruction offered by such documents as *Doctrina Cristiana*, the first book printed in the Philippines and Juan de Oliver's explanation of the Ten Commandments, both targeted at Tagalog audience (Rosales 1984).

A quick note about St. Michael the Archangel: His importance in Tayabas Catholicism needs more historical research. Devotion to him did not transpire in our data-gathering even if the main church of the province is named after him. He is in fact the titular patron saint of Tayabas. The most that has been said about him are descriptions of his feast on September 29, celebrated town-wide but without the festivities accorded to *Mayohan*. This only shows the arguably total eminence San Isidro has been accorded in the recent years, heightened most especially by the establishment of the *Mayohan* Festival. Historical records show nevertheless that the feast of St. Micheal the Archangel was once a "magnet that gathered the scattered population" in the *cabecera* (Abila, Pataunia, and Redor 1987: 9) during the Spanish era. The Archangel, whose iconography typically portrays him stepping on the devil, must have indeed been a powerful symbol for the Franciscans who were attempting to crush Tagalog animism and, most likely, the imminent threat from Moro raiders as well (see Non 1993).

As expected, certain stories about him are common. Ka Torio Abesamis, for instance, shares that during the time of the Americans, some locals witnessed the sword of St. Michael the Archangel at the church's façade waving, as if a gesture to protect the place. Indeed, in 1945, during a raid by the US Airforce in Tayabas, "the church was miraculously spared from destruction because the bombs did not explode" (Abila, Pataunia, Redor 1987). A statue of the Archangel is one of the many saints frequented in the church's prayer garden.

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The prominence of Virgin Mary is also evident in Tayabas. In fact, each of the different *barangays* where a *Munting Sambayanang Kristiyano* exists has a particular identity of the Our Lady as a secondary patron saint. Notable too is Ermita Church where Nuestra Senora de Dolores is enshrined and commemorated in local *turumba* celebrations, carried out by many locals in tandem with the *Turumba* Festival in Pakil, Laguna. In fact, according to a tourism flyer from the LGU, one of the originally intended purposes of *baliskog* was to welcome pilgrims from Pakil, Laguna as a sign of new life. This connection between Tayabas and Pakil is not surprising given the Franciscan presence in both places during the Spanish period (Tormo Sanz 1971).

Another area that needs in-depth investigation and documentation is the presence of what may be seen as folk Catholic religious expressions. In some of our encounters with locals, we have been informed about existing groups like the Rizalians (who believe, for example, that Rizal is a prophet and not a deity) and others that may still be invoking a pre-Hispanic belief in spirits in nature, for instance. What is interesting about them is that they reveal continuities with Tagalog religion and maybe



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also the aspirations of these groups.

Reyes (2002: 118), for example, records that stories surrounding *Bathala* or *Nuno* reveal that prior to the entry of the Christian Creator, the Tagalogs already had "the whole concept of the beginning of the world or the galaxy itself". *Bathala* was renamed as *Infinito Dios* or *Dios na Walang Hanggan* to avoid persecution. These "translations" adopted from Spanish Catholicism have found their way in *anting-anting* and other texts about secret knowledge which, according to Pambid (1989), includes *Karunungan ng Dios* by Melencio Sabino (1955). We have obtained a copy of this old book from Mayor Dondi Silang. Intriguingly different from the usual Biblical account, a narrative of creation from the *Karunungan ng Dios* is as follows (p. 89):

Nang lalalang na ng tao ang Infinito Dios, ay bigla siyang pinawisan, at ng iwaksi ng kanyang kaliwang kamay ay naging labing anim na tao at binigyan niya sila ng kani-kanilang kalalagyan...Ang sabi ng Infinito Dios sa dalawang pinakamatatanda ay ganito: MATIM RUEAC – kayong dalawa ang maghahawak at magbibigay ng liwanag sa Araw at sa Buwan; ikaw UP MADAC ang maghahawak sa liwanag ng Araw, at ikaw naman ABO NATAC ang maghahawak sa liwanag ng Buwan; nasa inyong dalawa ang pagbibigaw ng liwanag sa sanglibutan.

Moreover, we were very fortunate that *Tatay Melo Rana*, 60, of *Munting Bayan*, showed to us his well kept *anting-anting* collection and sacred shirt and handkerchiefs passed down to him by his ancestors and relatives. As shown in the photo, what is noticeable is the dominance of Latin inscriptions which even *Tatay Melo* admits to be unable to understand.

According to Pambid (1989), the use of Latin, Greek, and Hebrew in *anting-anting* and *oracion* must have been introduced by the *babaylan* (or *katalonan*) as a way of assimilating new practices brought by Spanish Catholicism. Like other folk religious practices, the assimilation was not so much about appeasing friars as it was about adopting supernatural powers from Spanish Catholicism. In so doing, however, this has effectively marginalized indigenous beliefs in *Bathala*, among many others.

Mahihinuha na bagama't nagugumuit ang Kedusang Pilipino at ipinagpapalagay na mas una at makapangyarihan sa Dios ng mga Kastila, nananatili ang katotohanan na nagapi ang mag Pilipino at nakapanaig ang mas superior na armas ng Kastila sa politika at

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maging sa relihiyon man. Ito marahil ang hinanakit ng mga babaylan kung kaya iniangkop o ginamit ang Latin at iba pang balbal na wikang Accadian na animo'y tore ng Babel na hindi magkaunawaan upang mag-angkin at maramitan din sila ng kapangyarihang sa akala nila'y idinudulot nito sa Kastila...Dahil hindi nakapanaig si Bathala o ang Nuno, nanatiling perperal ang paniniwala ng mga Pilipino, hindi naipahayag, naging isang lihim na karunungan o karunungan di hayag (Pambid 1989: 224 cited in Reyes 2002: 119)

Paradoxically, marginalized as the *anting-anting* and other practices may have been, they became instrumental in strengthening the Filipino revolutionaries. Domingo (2009: 124) highlights the fact that *anting-anting* was used by revolutionary forces in a manner that was meant to empower their social location:

Because true freedom and equality were not obtained, the struggle of the masses was transferred to the spiritual plane to empower the poor and the oppressed. Stripped of power because of poverty, it is in the spiritual realm that the poor and marginalized tried to compensate for their materials and social deprivation by being members of the various *samahan* (associations), and through the use of *anting-anting* and the magical powers they hope it can effect in their lives.

Indeed, but arguably set in a different social landscape, the use of *anting-anting* and sacred vests is still present in Tayabas. *Tatay* Melo Rana, who was once in the military, explains to us that he



wore the shirt and the handkerchief with sacred inscriptions during engagements with insurgent elements in the province to protect him from bullets¹⁴. The shirt (see photo) was worn under his uniform while the handkerchief was wrapped in a bandana and tied around his head. He reinforced this with certain *oracion* for protection, a practice which he does until today and admits has saved him from certain attacks against him. In practicing these, both *Tatay* Melo and *Tatay* Torio emphasize that "*kailangang bukal sa iyong kalooban ang paniniwala*". A person's belief in the religious artifact appears to be fundamental to its effectiveness. Indeed, they even share stories of their relatives and ancestors whom they describe as "*maalam sa mga dasal at oracion*" perform

extraordinary acts such as sitting on banana leaves and coiling *barita*, a farming tool made of heavy iron.

Finally, we need to mention the emergence of other non-Catholic faiths in Tayabas. Throughout the fieldwork, we encountered several churches such as Jehovah's Witnesses, Iglesia ni Cristo, and Protestant denominations. While there are no official statistics available, an Iglesia ni Cristo member from the municipal hall estimates their membership to be somewhere around 4,200. A pastor from an independent Christian church estimates that the collective membership of their 15 churches in Tayabas may be around 1,500. Official statistics from the Mayor's office is not available. We suggest that a comprehensive data about non-Catholic religious organizations may be helpful in consolidating efforts from various sectors within Tayabas, a point we shall elaborate in the final section on governance structures and community organizations. Moreover, as a religious sector, these various organizations may be offering alternative avenues for Tayabasins to express their religiosity or spirituality.

¹⁴ Pambid (1989) points out that vests or chalecos with sacred inscriptions were already worn even during the war with the Americans, as seen in photos in Harper's History of the War in the Philippines.

III. Faith-based Rituals

In building the cultural heritage of a community, the usual emphasis is placed by official organizers on grand rituals that are turned into festivals. Although well-meaning, efforts like this neglect the existence of other significant practices but less known since they are in marginal areas. In the previous section, it must have been evident that we are highlighting not only the well-known rituals, thus giving recognition to the efforts of communities in the *linang* as well.

Along these lines, another contribution this paper offers is a closer inspection of certain everyday rituals that, even if innately taken for granted by locals, are in fact heavily informed by religious beliefs. These rituals take place as part of everyday interactions mostly occurring in the *linang*, which may be reflective of their connections to nature and old Tagalog beliefs. It is not surprising therefore that they are not practiced in the urbanizing scene that is the *bayan* – unless perhaps the *bayan* resident visits the *linang*. Upon studying them, we discovered layers of folk religiosity that reveal the uniqueness of religious heritage in Tayabas that is not mainly Catholic. We point out that some of these faith-based rituals, carried out at the everyday level, have become effective in maintaining the value of interpersonal relationships and the protection of nature.

In this section we focus on the two faith-based rituals involving *erehiya* and *balis* which transpired quite noticeably in our data-gathering process. In fact, our discovery of these two ideas happened by chance as we were visiting the *linang*. Upon meeting locals, entering houses, and passing by certain sites in the *linang*, we were warned to behave in a certain way. We discuss, too, the treatments adopted by locals in the event that they are affected, *nabalis*, or *nagalaw*. Towards the end, we focus on how these faith-based rituals have contributed to an appreciation of nature and human relationships.

Erehiya

Determining the exact definition of *erehiya* has been elusive for us mainly because we have encountered different attempts, although they are not completely unrelated to each other. The official definition, according to James English's Tagalog-English Dictionary (1990)¹⁵, is as follows:

heresy; a belief different from the accepted belief of a church, school or profession. *syn.*
maling pananampalataya, hidwang pananampalataya

A similar definition is found in Almario's UP *Diksiyonaryong Filipino* (2001) but with a scope restricted to church doctrine:

paniniwala o paraan ng pagsasampalataya na hindi umaalinsunod sa doktrina ng simbahan.

Such consensus on the official definition derives itself from the Spanish origin of the word. According to Ignacio's (1922) *Diccionario Hispano-Tagalo*, *herejia* is

kamalian sa pananampalataya. fig. salitang lumalait sa kapwa

In Tayabas, however, the application seems to be more specific but still related to the concept of heresy. In many of our interviews with locals in the *linang*, particularly those from *barangays* close to Mt. Banahaw such as Alitao, *erehiya* is employed to refer to sites believed to be inhabited and protected by unseen entities such as *engkantos*. Indeed, these sites are often portrayed as haunted hence visitors need not be surprised to hear voices (of animals or persons when nobody else is evidently there) or see unexpected entities (usually in the periphery) best described as supernatural. As will be clear later on, failure to give deference to these entities can lead to certain disturbances.

Also, they are by and large very difficult to access. Through Alitao, for example, it took us four hours just to reach by foot *Balagbag na Burol*, an *erehiya* hill (foreground in photo below) connected to

¹⁵ For reasons not evident, E. Arsenio Manuel's lexicographic study of Tayabas Tagalos (1971) does not contain an entry for *erehiya*.

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Mt. Banahaw. The rain worsened the journey for us. For more on *erehiya* sites, an interesting travel account may be found in Mayuga (2009).



Given its etymology in the Spanish language¹⁶, it makes sense to argue that the notion has been imposed upon the local community by missionaries to delineate the “truth” of Catholicism and the “lies” of animism – the heresy itself. The concept, first of all, refers to a heretic belief, an impression that only the missionaries could have formulated. Indeed, in the eyes of missionaries, folk spiritual entities are of the devil, imminent in the daily affairs of the community. Such attitude underpins the opening lines on Tagalog religion by Fr. Chirino (1969: 296), a 16th century Jesuit missionary:

Although entering the darksome cave of so much idolatrous blindness I find a disorderly confusion of things most vile and abominable, befitting the devil their inventor, and although on scraping the wall within this hellish cave I discover a multitude of obscene, loathsome and truly fiendish worms, it is my task to identify them methodically in the light of truth so that we may praise the All-Powerful God...and take pity on those who blind in their darkness love and esteem the light yet know not how to open their eyes to it.

¹⁶ We take note here however that some locals in the *bayan* have explained to us that *erehiya* may have been derived from the word “energy”. Gener Abordo, for example, who works in the local government, points out that unexplained energies causing people to fear may be present even in the *bayan*’s Casa de Comunidad.

In addition, the notion of *erehiya* could not have been developed among pre-Hispanic Tagalogs because of the polytheistic nature of their religion, deifying deceased relatives and patrons in nature. Indeed, Scott (1999: 229) points out that "uninhabited forests...were only entered after asking the permission of sylvan deities for hunting, foraging, or timbering". Deities would therefore have had their own sacred sites that must have been labeled *erehiya* later on given Christianization.

But what accounts for the application to specific sites in Tayabas? It is interesting to note that Christianization was given shape by Franciscans in the Philippines through the *reduccion* method, gathering inhabitants from far areas in one settlement, thus creating the *poblacion* (Abila, Pataunia, and Redor 1987). The *poblacion*, whose center is the Catholic church, was possibly envisioned to be a physical expression of the heavenly city, thus pitting itself against the backdrop of the wilderness in the far areas leading to the mountain. In European depictions of organized towns especially during the medieval period, the wilderness was always considered to be untamed where wild creatures coexisted with demons. Also, the ravines, chasms, and torrents of the mountains just added to its hell-like imagery (see Porteous 1996). In other words, although this is not well detailed in the historical accounts, the *reduccion* method, as carried out by friars from Europe, may have transformed and reinforced the identity of Mt. Banahaw and the nearby areas as wilderness. In fact, many of those who rejected the *reduccion* and hence did not want to become *bajo de las campanas* went to the mountains and were called *cimmarones* or like wild animals (see Orillos 2004).

If this were accurate, we propose that what this did was that it transformed the sacredness of the mountain from one revered in pre-Hispanic Tagalog religion to one feared in Catholic cosmology. The mountain and its spirit-inhabited sites have become heretic. True enough, one of the main characteristics of an *erehiya* according to locals is that it is not frequented by people. Without a doubt, this explains why Mt. Banahaw, as it was outside the purview of Spanish Catholicism, became a site for mystical and anti-Spanish activities, not least of which is that inspired by Hermano Pule himself (Ileto 1979). The heretic became a site of refuge for those seen as heretics.

One hypothesis that we are putting forward here but needs further investigation is that *erehiya* is mainly applied to areas within Mt. Banahaw and nearby. Our visit to the foot of Mt. Banahaw, for example, has shown to us that there are specific localities within the mountain where visitors are warned most heavily about the presence of spiritual protectors. In addition, when asked whether the entire mountain itself can be considered *erehiya*, Tatay Elias Sombrero readily admits so. This is in contrast to our observation that locals – even old ones – in *barangays* far from Mt. Banahaw such as

Lakawan are not familiar at all with the word itself. Supporting this is that we have observed, too, that those living in these *barangays* interestingly have their origins in areas near Mt. Banahaw.

Although they may not necessarily be called *erehiya*, seemingly related to it is the notion among Tayabasins of areas inhabited by unseen entities capable of harming individuals once disturbed. This explains why we were asked to peacefully pass by a very small spring bordered by natural rock formation during the *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* in the *tubigan* of Silangang Katigan. We were simultaneously warned not to react if we happen to see anything. In other encounters, certain rock formations have been identified as *buhay na bato* because they are said to be growing in size while other cave-like formations in the highly secluded places in the *linang* are also considered enchanted and therefore *erehiya*. Certain stories like the rock that covers the opening of the cave at times opens up are quite common, for example.

Very noteworthy during these moments of encountering *erehiya* and *erehiya*-like sites were the subtle discourses employed by locals to speak of the moment – the everyday ritual itself. Since *erehiya* is supposed to be protected by unseen entities, extra precaution is expected of anyone visiting. In preparing for our visit to Mt. Banahaw, for example, *Tatay* Elias Sombrero and *Tatay* Tome Sombrero reminded us that "*Ang makita ay makita*" and "*Ang marinig ay marinig*", a way of describing supernatural occurrences without being explicit about them. When asked what specifically they might be, they elaborated that these could be voices of human beings or animals that should not be there naturally. So instead of noticing them, we are asked to just let them be. In the same manner, Badeth Padrique, one of our local team members, during the *Paglilibot* in Silangang Katigan pleaded to us "*Huwag na lang po kayong magsalita kung may nakita po kayo*". And when an individual exhibits symptoms of having been affected by supposedly unseen entities, locals minimize its gravity by describing the person as "*nagalaw*" or "*napaglaruan*". In fact, one of our young local informants admits that her grandmother was once possessed and at the time of the interview was already recovering.

Quite straightforwardly, this sustained presence and subtlety of powerful entities may be explained by the fear among locals for their ability to harm, a belief in contrast to certain African religions where spirit possession, for example, is integrated in religious ritual (see Platvoet 2000). The Tayabasin belief in powerful unseen entities can be traced back to pre-Hispanic religion. In fact, according to Franciscan Ribadeneira, Franciscan chronicler in the 16th century, Tagalogs "revered a number of minor gods and goddesses whom they worshipped and to whom they offered sacrifices of food and gold; some of these gods reigned over their dead, and others they pacified with gifts to avoid

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ill-luck" (1975: 343). Given Spanish Christianization, the offering is now largely eradicated and the language to describe or refer to these gods has been silenced as well, a significant missionary achievement but arguably not wide-ranging enough to have eradicated the belief. This, we shall see later on with regards to treatments to *balis* and *galaw*, has surfaced in the form of what may be called folk Catholicism.

Balis

In the Lexicographic Study of Tayabas Tagalog, Manuel (1971) defines *balis* as:

Usog; isang uri ng sakit na pinaniniwalaang likha ng kapwa-tao sa biglang pagkikita, o ng masamang hangin. Kinaugalian na ng mga mag-anak na wikaing "puwera balis" o "supla balis" kung dinadalaw ng kaibigan or kapit-bahay, o kinatutuwaan ang kanilang pasusuhing anak ng ibang tao o kamag-anak.

Although there is this official definition, it is also important to consider how it is locally understood in Tayabas. According to some of our informants, *balis* is when one experiences pain in the stomach, dizziness, and excessive perspiration as a result of failing to greet first upon an encounter whether at home or elsewhere. The pain is almost unbearable. We quote from Efren Rodillas, a farmer in the *linang*, who describes it as when "*pinapawisan ng malamig ...hindi mapalagay medyo sumasakit ang tiyan, pinapawisan ng malamig.*" In addition, he explains based on experience that there is a greater risk that one will experience *balis* during noontime:

"...lalo na yong katanghaling tapat, yung nakasalubong kong tao, tapos ay binabati, kapag tinignan mo tapos ay yon matatransfer na sayo yun... Halimbawa saan ba punta mo? O lakad mo gay-un siyempre kilala mo pero meron talagang taong sabi nila matataas ang grado ng dugo. Kaya tingin nang tingin sayo dun ka natatalo tapos sasakit na ang tiyan mo at pinapawisan ka na."

Upon entering the house, the father from the *tubigan* must be greeted first by the children in order to avoid the *balis* that may be transferred to them. At other times, *balis* may be easily transferred

by merely chancing each other in the eye as they come across in the ricefield. It is interesting to note that similar practices are present in other cultures as well. The concept of strong or hot "breath", usually in the form of complements on others especially children, is believed in some Visayan and Muslim cultures in the Philippines to be potent enough to inflict abdominal pain. And in the Mediterranean and Latin America, there are beliefs about the "evil eye" carried by certain individuals that can injure others even if unintentionally (Tan 2008).

Local Tayabasins explain that one acquires *balis* only after receiving it from somebody who has it. Generally, the one who has "*mas mataas na dugo*" or "*mas malakas na balis*" can hurt one who is weaker. There is a common understanding among the many locals we have interviewed that *balis* is particularly transferable at noontime and especially when the other person has "*mataas na dugo*". In fact, as we passed by the home of a very old man during the *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* in Silangang Katigan, we were cautioned by a local to avoid staring at him as "*malakas ang kanyang balis*". The logical connection might be that high temperature leads to a rise in one's blood pressure. While this may be the case, it is not evident how an increased blood pressure can harm another person – and unwittingly at that. Tan (1987: 75) makes the case that the "concept of...'*mas mataas ang dugo*'...is indicative of social structure: a husband being dominant over his wife; an adult requiring respect from a child".

In his more recent work on *usog* (a synonym of *balis*), Tan (2008) suggests that the ability to cause harm on another person may be derived from the concept of life force evident in Tagalog and many other Asian cultures (as in the Chinese notion of *Qi*, for example). Present in any animate object, most especially human beings, the life force may be energies or psychic forces that a body contains. This is notably different from the soul, which in Catholic understanding, needs salvation, hence, is almost powerless. It is no wonder therefore why adults who have *balis* can effectively harm infants because of their well developed bodies containing arguably stronger forces (see Tan 1987).

Interestingly, however, this concept of the life force is not blatant in the local vernacular, as opposed to the Ilonggo concept of *dungan*, for example, which is the will power that can in itself inflict the pain (see Tan 2008). Local Tayabasins could not explain what specifically causes the injury, for example. What we propose here, however, is that *balis* and the practices that surround it derive from old beliefs about the *loob* or the inner being. This is the reason why they are appropriately treated in this report as faith-based.

In his landmark work on the *pasyon* and the revolution, Ileto (1979) argues that the use of *anting-anting* by the Filipino revolutionaries was not a casual reliance on magical power in the hope of

overturning Spanish power. In fact, the effectiveness of *anting-anting* was first and foremost dependent on one's *loob* or inner being. "For the power that is concentrated in an amulet to be absorbed by its wearer," argues Iletto (p. 25), "the latter's *loob* must be properly cultivated through ascetic practices, prayer, controlled bodily movements and other forms of self-discipline". For this, Iletto (1979) footnotes a long list of do's and don'ts, from not eating sour or salty food to not telling a lie, for an *anting-anting* to take effect (taken from Mayo 1925).

Upon receiving the inner force of an *anting-anting*, one whose *loob* is pure and intact became capable of controlling the elements and performing miraculous wonders. This is opposed to Judas, who in the *pasyon* "is treacherous because his *loob* is 'disoriented' and 'hard as rock'; in the end he hangs himself" (p. 26). These beliefs are exactly what Tan (2008: 32) calls animatism, "the idea that an object has power of its own, which can be transferred to someone in possession of that object".

What these ideas suggest about the *loob* is that it is not so much dependent on the power of the *anting-anting* as it is on its very condition. In the final analysis, the *loob*'s condition has bearing in the here-and-now, leading to consequences either to the person's advantage or otherwise. What this also suggests is that there has been a solid belief among Tagalogs that there is power that lies within and must only be empowered enough to move nature. In speaking of the conceptual relationship between *gayuma*, *anting-anting*, and the life force carried by individuals, Tan (2008: 32) rightly concludes that if "objects are seen as potentially powerful, it is easy to see why humans are also believed to have some potent life force which could cause illness, even without the individual's wanting to cause illness".

For being an unseen force that only human beings can cause on others, we suggest that *balis* conceptually draws from the same beliefs old Tagalogs had about the potency of the *loob* or the inner being. Indeed, we have even heard of personal stories of swine being injured by *balis*.

In curing the *balis*, almost all of our informants said that making a cross on the stomach using the saliva of the carrier of the 'heat' will cure the *balis* of that particular person. Doing this restores "the equilibrium of the patient's body" (Tan 1987: 74). Known as *laway*, the act itself is being followed by many of the respondents we have met. Doubt however exists in some other locals. Recounting the story of her neighbor, Marivic Padrique of Silangang Katigan comments:

"lalo na't`kapag nalawayan daw ay gamot, pero yung iba ay talagang hindi naniniwala sa ganun. Tulad niyan diyan sa kapitbahay yan sila Allan, wala siyang paniwala pero't dahil hindi pa nangyayari sa kanila...lalo na yong asawa

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ni Allan, hindi talaga siya naniniwala sa mga ganyan. Yung mga nagpapagamot sa...mga albularyo...hindi siya naniniwala."

Clearly, we could see that there are doubters of the powers of saliva in healing *balis* since it is not proven. Nevertheless, we noticed that applying saliva in the form of a cross could signify the merging of both the traditional and Catholic rituals since they complement each other and heal the *balis*. Indeed, it appears that the *laway* is a much simplified and easily doable form of *buga*, an elaborate process that uses masticated ingredients that only an *albularyo* or local healer can administer. Tan (2008) interestingly mentions that this is closely related to idea that the breath carries the life force. Although simple, *laway* must come from and be administered by the one who inflicted the *balis*. This requirement points to the shared nature of illness and health among Tagalog people, that each one in the community has the responsibility of upholding collective wellness.

Treatment

Having discussed the concepts of *erehiya* and *balis* whose faith-based practices are meant to avoid injury on other individuals, it is appropriate to cover as well the treatments employed by locals in the event that injury is experienced. In the previous section, we have mentioned the use of *laway*. Here, however, we delve into the more elaborate treatment that only experts can administer, which in itself underpins the gravity of illnesses involved: *buga* and *suob*. It is worth bearing in mind that alongside medical expertise offered by doctors in Tayabas, a significant fraction of locals we have met still concedes to these local treatments, as reflected in a quote a local informant in Silangang Katigan:

"...yung bata na nagsusuka, nilalagnat. Itatanong niya [the doctor] kung napabugahan mo na...Oo dahil may karanasan na yung kapatid nung duktor, first baby nila, takot na takot talaga siya dahil nagsusuka, nilalagnat. Dinala nila sa duktor pagbalik, ganun pa rin. E nung pinabugahan, parang lang nagdahilan...parang di nagkasakit so naniniwala talaga ako."

Buga

It is possible that there are other variations of *buga*. However, based on our interviews with local experts, specifically those who administer it or have undergone it, *buga* generally refers to the ritual carried out by a *nangnganganga* or *albularyo* (*manggagamot*) involving application of chewed herbs on the body part requiring healing. The ingredients are *dahon ng ikmo*, *apog*, *maskada* (made of tobacco leaf), and *bunga*¹⁷. In the words of Nanay Lydia Cantos, a *manggagamot* from Malao-a whose husband is also one (see photo), summarizes the process as follows:

*"Yang apat na 'yan 'pag pinagsama-sama,
labi ng matanda'y bumubula
Gamot sa lahat ng uri ng sakit, lalo't ikaw ay
nabalis."*

The juice extracted is spat out (*buga*) and applied with certain *oracion* or special prayer. Fever-like illnesses and skin diseases are commonly treated.



There does not seem to be any elaborate rite required but the role of secret knowledge and expertise seems to be very important to the effective administration of *buga*. Even Tatay Tome Sombrero, who has undergone the ritual, admits that there is spiritual knowledge exclusive to the *nangnganganga*. In the Philippines and in other Southeast Asian countries, it is worth noting that *nganga* is a common practice. It appears however that not all can administer it as a cure. Apparently, those who have been "gifted" with secret knowledge are the only ones who can offer it.

This is rather intriguing because the diseases often brought to the *nangnganganga* are not immediately seen by them as caused by spiritual entities (except when caused by *balis*); they are natural skin diseases, for example. It is expected, however, that in areas where access to medical health

¹⁷ Tan (1987) records other methods by the albularyo.

practitioners is physically and socially limited, locals immediately go to folk healing experts¹⁸. But despite the absence of mystical entities causing the illness, the *nangganganga* draws his ability to heal from hidden spiritual knowledge. In their own accounts, both *Tatay* Mario and *Nanay* Lydia Cantos of Malao-a admit that they use *oracion* or special prayers which they whisper as they apply the *buga*. In the event that the *buga* does not work, they will use a more powerful prayer instead – and even a secret herb *Nanay* Lydia was not willing to show us.

When asked where they got the *oracion*, *Nanay* Lydia explains very generally that she had an experience in her 30s that made her see through layers of soil in the ground. This made her discover "*mga sikretong salita na hindi dapat malaman ng marami*". In fact, the secret is not even shared with her husband, who happens to have his own prayers as well. Interestingly, the narratives surrounding the "*sikretong salita*" heavily utilize Biblical language. "*Sikretong salita*" in itself derives from belief in Christ as the Word that became flesh. In explaining the secrecy for example, *Nanay* Lydia recounts:

"Ito'y nasa Bibliya. Hahanapin ninyo ito ha? Babalik ang anak ng tao at parurusahan tayo ayon sa ating mga ginawa. Hango sa Bibliya iyon. Kaya secret na lang yun. 'Pag pinagsabi namin yun, aba, baka maharap kami sa huling siglo. Kasi 'yun ang mga salitang hindi dapat malaman ng marami."

This merging of Catholic-influenced *oracion* and their narratives and folk healing is a classic example of folk Catholicism that even Spanish friars themselves took pains in the hope of eradicating them. The *anting-anting*, it has been said, is another example (Domingo 2009). In the words of Franciscan friar Ribadeneira (1970: 344), for example, "we all pray and hope that with the unflagging patience and perseverance of the missionaries all these idolatrous customs will soon vanish..." This is the main reason why they have become subdued through the centuries. In the form of folk Catholicism, however, it is the very secret nature of this knowledge that has become key to the effectiveness of *buga* in the eyes of both the practitioners and the locals. We have been fortunate to borrow from Mayor

¹⁸ This is, of course, not to contend that local healing practices will necessarily fade away as a community "develops" (see, for instance, Bowie 2000). Even among locals in Tayabas who can access doctors, some still believe in the potency of folk healing practices. *Tatay* Mario Cantos, a *manggagamot* himself, also admits that even visitors from Manila come to him for healing. Clearly, this is a challenge for the health sector that aims at professionalizing and raising the health standards in Tayabas. Having said this, it is perhaps in the community's interest that folk healing practices be investigated more closely, in terms of herbal medicine, for example. This is implicit in Dr. Doronila's (see his section) emphasis on traditional/local ecological knowledge.

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Dondi Silang's personal library a very old book entitled "*Karunungan ng Dios*" (Sabino 1955)¹⁹. Although the purpose, audience, and origin of the book are not verified, it contains what it claims to be "*lihim na karunungan*" such as narratives about nature, certain religious characters, and "*ORACION and PANALANGIN ukol sa sarisaring sakit at mga karamdaman*". An example is as follows (p. 382):

Sa Lagnat at sa Pilay-Hangin, Ibulong sa Kamay na Ihihiilot at sa Tubig na Ipaiinom:

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Such adoption of Latin and Latin-sounding terminologies is, without a doubt, another example of how Catholicism has influenced the much older local healing practices in the region. In the discussion about *erehiya* above, we have mentioned that a massive campaign against heresy was introduced by the friars, which is the possible reason why local healing practices like the *buga* had to assimilate certain Catholic nuances for them to be tolerable, at the very least. At other times, situations or individuals were naturally interpreted in light of Catholic ideas as when *Hermano Pule*, for example, became a Tagalog Christ in the local narratives of many in Tayabas province (Ileto 1979). In the case of *buga*, it is possible that it evolved as a result of being banished while at the same time its practitioners started drawing from Catholic prayers and narratives. After all, healing using betel nut (*nganga*) has been a practice even before Spanish friars arrived. During healing rites, the *katalonan* begins

by making her prognosis by augury, stating whether the case was serious or even fatal...During the healing rite itself, she would smear the patient's forehead with betel nut she had chewed, or with blood from a *padugo* sacrifice, such as two chickens mated before cutting their throats. The climax came when she fell into a trance and sent her *kaluluwa* to call the truant spirit of the patient, or that of the ancestor responsible for the affliction (Scott 1994: 240).

The *manggagamot* or *albularyo*, therefore, is the contemporary expression of the pre-Hispanic *katalonan*, who, this time, establishes his authority based on secret knowledge and practices that

¹⁹ The book is about to be digitized as part of this report's database. We thank the Rizal Library for doing this for us.

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empower his *nganga*, among many other healing rituals (see Paular 2004). Alongside, they are expected to be very familiar with medicinal plants and herbs used for curing specific illnesses. *Nanay* Lydia Cantos admits that she uses a secret plant (*halamang lunas*) especially when the disease is severe.

As mentioned earlier, Tan (2008) sees the close relationship between *buga* and the hot "breath" which carries the life force. Reflecting this similarity, Chirino (1969), in his 16th century accounts, describes how a male *katalonan* conducts the healing process:

The man pretended to cure them by applying the end of a reed over the place where the sick man felt the most pain, and then with his mouth from the other end he inhales the air from within, whereupon he spat out three small stones which he pretended to have taken from the patient's body.

Although no longer explained by the locals, the *buga* may simply be taking on the role of the "breath" that carries the life force in order to provide healing action to the body. Notable here is the idea that "breath" which may harm others through *balis* is countered by another variation of breath, *buga* – but given efficacy through whispered *oracion*.

Suob

In Tayabas, many locals believe in *galaw* or being played upon by some mysterious entities or, in their terminology, the *lamang-lupa*²⁰. Although locals believe that *galaw* may be a random act, it is often explained in terms of possible disturbance the person made in a territory occupied by spirits. "*Napaglaruan*" is the underplayed way of describing such unexplainable phenomena that range from recurrent fever to dementia and possession. A local informant in the *linang* shares with us that her husband, for example, was "*napaglaruan*" for some time because he would seem to be seeing a different environment and got lost every time he came home when in fact he was just around the vicinity of the house. Altered consciousness and illness are the general conditions of *nagalaw*.

²⁰ We have noticed in Tayabas that among locals we have interviewed, there is no distinct knowledge of the cosmology to which spirits belong and even their typology as well. They are generally called evil spirits, *lamang-lupa*, *nuno*, or *engkanto*, which is in contrast to the graphic knowledge about unseen entities in other settings in the Philippines. Nevertheless, it is believed that *engkantos* can take on the form of such animals as dog and swine.

In the event that one is suspected to be *nagalaw*, usually when the condition is impossibly prolonged and no longer explainable, the person is brought to *manggagamot* who can administer the *suob* ritual. According to *Tatay Tome Sombrero*, who himself has experienced being administered *suob*, the ritual generally involves the fumigation (*pagsuob*) of incense (*kamangyan*). In the documentary "*Kuwaresma*" (1998), *suob* is used in the *Santo Entierro* procession in Pakil, Laguna where the dead Christ in the *carroza* at certain stages pauses for *suob* (using lanzones peel) to take place. The *suob* replicates the Old Testament form of worship whereby the smoke represents the prayer of the people. Likewise, in the context of the *suob* healing ritual, the smoke (coming from incense) is another form of prayer but meant to exorcise the spiritual oppression within the body.

What is interesting about the *suob* healing ritual, however, is that it typically involves *pagtatawas* or the process of identifying the *engkanto* behind the illness by using candle. Again, this syncretism may be another form of folk Catholicism that is the result of the evangelization process. Scott (1994: 240) records that in addition to *katalonan* or *babaylan* who could administer healing rituals, there were also sorcerers "who could work both black magic and white without special appeal to deities". Specifically, they could conduct *mantala* or "exorcisms or magic formulas, considered most efficacious if in 'the language of Borneo' – that is, Malay" (p. 241).

The following is an account by Chan delos Santos, one of the undergraduate student members of the Rituals, Festivals, and Beliefs team during the ACL in May 2009:

It was the 4th of May 2009 when our group interviewed Maria Tabanaw, a *suob* healer who resides at Barangay Camaysa, Tayabas. It was Sunday and late in the afternoon when our group arrived at her place. We proceeded to interview her regarding the process of *suob* healing among those who became sick due to unseen entities. From the interview, we gathered that the process of *suob* healing is passed on to those people who are capable of doing the job. She pointed out to us was the influence of her Catholic beliefs on her role as a *suob* healer because she mentioned that having faith in God helped her cure her patients. In her house are a Black Nazarene statue and various Catholic images such as the Virgin Mary and many other religious figures. The interview lasted about 45 minutes which was very helpful in understanding traditional ways of healing.

As we were about to leave, a lady with her child approached *Nanay* Maria and asked her to check what kept her child in sick bay for a couple of days. Somewhat surprised with what has just occurred, we asked permission from *Nanay* if we can watch her perform *suob* to that child. She then agreed and asked her again if we could document it to her approval.

She then got her materials needed for the ritual namely a white basin, candle, and oil. The *suob* started with a prayer by *Nanay* asking God for guidance for her to heal and help the child recover from the sickness. She then poured oil on the forehead of the baby in a crucifix pattern. In a way, it somewhat resembled like the anointing of chrism that is done in some of the Sacraments of the Catholic Church. The baby then started to cry as *Nanay* tried to proceed with the healing process. Suddenly, *Nanay* started to talk to the patient telling her to get out, all of this while pouring some oil on the back of the basin. She explained that she was talking not to the child physically but to the spirit that was inside and controlling her, seen in her continuous crying and resistance of the power of *Nanay* Maria. She placed the lighted candle on the basin (turned sideways) and we waited as nothing showed up. She repeated the process of putting oil in the basin for a few more minutes. After several repetitions, a figure was formed in the basin that resembled a *nuno*. She then asked the mother what the child does usually and it turned out that the cause of this was the persistent staring of the child at the *punso* outside their backyard. Perhaps, according to *Nanay* Maria, the spirits were bothered by it so came the sickness.

The Meaning of Faith-based Rituals

One approach in analyzing cultural expressions (including ritual) in the social sciences is by looking at the function – both manifest and latent - they perform for the community (see Merton 1968). In doing so, we are able to highlight existing opportunities within the culture for community-based heritage tourism to be implemented more effectively. Contemporary anthropologists working on indigenous religion, after all, enjoin us to deviate from injudicious generalizations about what *must* be done as we learn from "particular peoples in particular places" (Connors 2000: 151). This section shall first look into the meaning of the aforementioned faith-based rituals. The paper's final section on

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community-based heritage tourism will look at existing governance structures and new opportunities for community participation.

With regards to *balis*, one evident effect on behavior is that in avoiding it, one will have to be always courteous to others. As a form of social control, the belief in *balis* compels individuals to do what is right or courteous – but always in the context of social structure. Clearly, the young are expected to pay respects to the adults. In other contexts in the Philippines, the women need to greet men first. In both instances, adults and men, who have more developed physique and thus carry stronger *balis*, place prominently in the community structure. In fact, Tan (2008) argues that this is very consistent with Filipino expectations of modesty. Conversely, however, the practice may also be seen as a way of protecting the vulnerable, particularly the children. Put differently, the belief in *balis* recognizes that there are vulnerable individuals within the community. Hence, adults are expected to take caution when with children.

If the faith-based practices surrounding *balis* concern relationships with people, those surrounding *erehiya* concern relationships with nature. We could see that the people of Tayabas give importance to their environment and see to it that no one will ever attempt to ruin it for their personal gains. This seems practiced at two levels – informal and formal.

Informally, one recurrent example is the respect that must be paid to such natural elements in the *linang* as the *bukal* or spring or *punso* or anthill because of the possibility that when people try to even just point at them, the entities living there might strike them with curse or illness. In addition, although there is an *albularyo* ready for them to help, people would like to prevent themselves from experiencing *galaw*. In order to do this, they would say *tabi-tabi* whenever they pass an unwanted terrain or unknown territory. By uttering these words, the spirits and entities in the area are expected to give way to people.

Formally, one good example is the protection accorded to Mt. Banahaw. The way that certain groups try to protect it from outsiders by screening and inspection is due to the potential punishment that the guardians or spirits that live in the mountain can cause upon them.

For sure, these thoughts are also present in more urbanized settings like Manila but our observations reveal that they are more pronounced in Tayabas and possibly in other rural settings because of the significant respect accorded to traditional knowledge. In Peter Berger's (1969) terminology, the "sacred canopy" is still intact, which is why Paular (2004: 26) can make the case that even if "*madaling pakinggan ang mga...katuwirang pang-akademiko,...ang katotohanan dito'y isang*

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gawaing may kinalaman sa mga masasamang puwersa ng ating kapaligiran ang pangkukulam". In these places, the dominant narratives often bring together in their own logic such things as illness, spirits, and the unfamiliar environment. Reminiscent of the previous discussion on the wilderness as evil in Christian thought, Tan (2008: 62) rightly observes, therefore, that "territories of environmental spirits are often characterized as being extraordinary by virtue of their size..., shape..., or simply because the area is dark and isolated".

Beyond the myths, however, what must be highlighted here is the significance of the close affiliation that Tayabasins (and generally, Tagalogs) have with the environment. Unquestionably, the simplest explanation for such significance would have to be because of the agricultural nature of the community. While this may be the case, we propose that the close affiliation also draws from a deeply held religious view of the centrality of the environment. Spanish chronicler Chirino (1969) notes that the crocodile, which was held "in greatest veneration" was called *nono* or grandfather. In a slightly different manner, Orillos (2004) points out that one of the reasons why the mountain is revered is because a *diwata* or a *diyosa* resides in it and dialogues with human beings. In both cases, it is clear that the creature (or creation) and the divine are endeared as an entity with whom one relates. This probably underpins Chirino's (1969: 29) observation that there "was no aged tree that they did not regard as divine, and it was considered a sacrilege to even think of cutting it down for any reason whatsoever".

It is no wonder therefore that organizing themselves to protect Mt. Banahaw has not been a difficult matter; they are in a relationship. The organization *Luntiang Alyansa ng Bundok Banahaw* (LABB) has effectively partnered with both the government and the grassroots in setting up procedures in hiking Mt. Banahaw. An outsider will have to secure a permit from the Mayor's Office and must be accompanied through the terrain by a local who must carry an official ID. Local residents familiar with the routes are also given official ID, as in the case of *Tatay Elias Sombrero* (see photo) who accompanied us to the foothill of Mt. Banahaw.



The relationship seems to follow the principle that when nature is respected, it shall respect you. In the event that due respect to nature is not accorded, even if unwittingly, expect some levels of

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retaliation. We have heard of personal stories, for example, by *Tatay* Jose Sombrero, 50, *Barangay* Captain of Alitao, that as they visited some water formations in Mt. Banahaw to plan the construction of a water system for residents, their pictures were not developed and if any were, it had the image of a *duwende*. But more intriguingly, the water was found to be contaminated, an impossible finding given the supposedly superior freshness of water in the mountain. The following photo shows one of the rivers coming from Mt. Banahaw through Alitao.



This understanding of Tayabas affiliation with nature is essential in devising effective and well-owned ways of protecting the environment. We have drawn this conclusion from Connors's (2000: 150) insightful work on the Karuk natives in North America whose "natural resource managers understand people and the landscape as being in a complex and dynamic system of relationships in which the land and the people continually recreate and perpetuate each other". To the Karuk, there is an innate relationship with land and this serves as the principle by which resources are derived out of it, thus avoiding exploitation. In the same manner, there appears to be cultural affiliation with the environment because of its spiritual character. This informs the current faith-based practices as well as the formally organized structures meant to protect nature.

IV. Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats: Community Structures and the Potential for Community-based Heritage Tourism

In offering a SWOT analysis in this section, we take religious rituals in Tayabas as a whole since both annual cycle and faith-based rituals share common issues involving preservation and transmission. But perhaps the issues are more pressing for annual cycle rituals that may be evolving or diminishing (see Qeaño 1985) since, in contrast, faith-based rituals are very much part of the everyday life for many Tayabasins. Aligning with the main point of this research project, the emphasis of the SWOT analysis in this concluding part is in relation to community-based heritage tourism. Hence, community organizations and the *bayan-linang* dynamics initially suggested by students in the preliminary report shall be elucidated. The section will end by revisiting the importance of ritual meaningfulness, a threatened aspect of Tayabas heritage given the waning participation especially among the youth and the considerably weak attempts at protecting valuable religious artifacts.

We understand that the uniqueness of community-based heritage tourism lies in the key role that community members occupy both as participants and beneficiaries of tourism activities. As participants, community members, and not external entities or industries, are the prime-movers of tourism development. This is essential because more than anyone else, it is the community-members who are most adept at their own practices, thus securing significant levels of "respect for local culture, heritage and traditions" (Hatton 1999: 3). As beneficiaries, community members deserve the optimal gain that can be derived from tourism development, thus avoiding their exploitation as commodified objects of the tourist gaze. In his work on community-based tourism in the Asia-Pacific, Hatton (1999) suggests that when taken together, these two roles set the tone for sustainability mainly because there is ownership among community members. This means "the tourism activities are developed and operated, for the most part, by local community members, and certainly with their consent and support" (p. 3). In addition, community-based heritage tourism allows for the re-discovery of one's own rich culture. This is in contrast to how tourism in other settings has been developed to attract outsiders who eventually marginalized the locals. Speaking of global tourism, Sociologist John Urry (2002: 3) remarks that the "tourist gaze is directed to features of landscape and townscape which separate them off from everyday experience. Such aspects are viewed because they are taken to be in some sense out of the ordinary".

Throughout the data-gathering stage, therefore, it was our clear intention to be sensitive to these ideas. We did this at two levels.

First, we aimed to document as much religious ritual heritage as we could. Although we would concede that our list is not exhaustive given the constraints we had to work with, we hope that both the annual cycle and faith-based rituals included in this report have revealed practices and nuances typically missing in the purview of tourism organizers and others interested in Tayabas heritage. Specifically, we are very pleased to have been led to rituals present in the *linang*. In so doing, may we have stirred up the potential researcher to further explore unseen practices, thus going deeper and richer than the staple of tourism such as historic sites, postcards, and souvenirs (see Philippine Chamber of Commerce 2008). In a rapidly changing society, rituals – especially religiously informed ones – are directly threatened, which can lead to either their uncritical modification or demise. In the process, what is ultimately threatened, as far as locals are concerned, is the sense of community and identity, a lamentation we have encountered periodically. Indeed, Harvey (2000: 3) is justified to say that studying indigenous religions is important not because "they are necessarily different from – and especially not more 'simple', 'primitive' or less complex than – other ways of being human, but that they are similarly human".

Second, we also looked for existing structures – both formal and informal – that may be contributing one way or another to the preservation and propagation of the rituals we have encountered. Drawing from the social sciences, structures refer to those systems, practices, or organizations established within the community that support heritage tourism in Tayabas. Connors's (2000) work with Native Americans argues that effective tourism development must reflect the values and aspirations of the community, which may be manifest in existing structures. When tourism development is sensitive to the community, issues of labor and resource exploitation may be effectively evaded. This final section will focus on these structures, followed by some other opportunities for community-based heritage preservation we have encountered.

Community Organizations

Throughout the research, we found it very encouraging that there exist organizations – formal and informal – that are instrumental in the preservation and practice of religious rituals. Undoubtedly, the different parishes in Tayabas (*Ina ng Laging Saklolo*, *San Roque*, and St. Michael the Archangel) play

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important roles in the commemoration of important feasts and rituals. The local government is also behind the celebration of big events such as *Hagisan ng Suman* as part of the *Mayohan* Festival. In this section, however, we want to highlight those community organizations that are less prominent but are nevertheless offering significant contributions to the preservation and practice of the religious rituals we have mentioned. They may not be fully conscious about their role towards heritage tourism but their actions are worth noting and affirming. Community organizations may be either officially established with a set of rules and officers or less structured but still operational in the sense that individuals are familiar with social expectations.

We have mentioned, for one, the important role that the *Luntiang Alyansa ng Bundok Banahaw* (LABB) and even the Tayabas Mountaineers play in the protection of the mountain (see also Dr. Zialcita's section). As locals, they are most familiar with the routes and terrains and they are using this leverage to control access to the mountain. Hikers from the outside are expected to secure a permit from the local government and must be accompanied, failure to do which can be detrimental as there are no clear directions in the Tayabas side of the mountain. In addition, they are in partnership with the Office of the City Mayor and the Protected Area Management Board to empower locals familiar with the surrounding. Indeed, while LABB's concern is primarily the physical aspect of Mt. Banahaw, we want to make the case that it draws from a long history of reverence by Tayabasins towards the mountain, not just as *erehiya* but as sacred space in itself. In doing so, Mt. Banahaw as a prime heritage site for Tayabasins is upheld.

Another worth noting as a community organization is the *Munting Sambayanang Kristiyano* (Basic Ecclesiastical Community), whose founder in Quezon Province was Fr. Ciriaco A. Sevilla, Jr., a former parish priest in Tayabas and was recently given (posthumously) the Bukas-Palad Award at the Ateneo de Manila University. Through the MSK, Fr. Sevilla worked so that "the Church in his area would become truly 'the Church of the poor'" (Ateneo de Manila University 2009). Today MSK units are very prominent in the *linang* of Tayabas where the priest is largely inaccessible. As of late, there are at least 60 MSKs divided into 12 *kawans* under the parish of St. Michael alone. There are two other parishes in Tayabas.

We first encountered MSK in action in Silangang Katigan when we participated in the *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* during the Ateneo Cultural Laboratory. One of the team members who is also a Catholic priest from Indonesia, Fr. Lusius Mau remarked that he found it very heartening to see that locals organized the feast without the supervision of any priest. An officer of MSK in the previous year, *Nanay*

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Marivic Padrique explains to us that everyone knew that a *libot* would take place every May 15, although it is the MSK that spearheads the activity (see photo).



Although this is not an official rule, we find it interesting that the officers of MSK have always been married women, a phenomenon that reflects their traditionally religious role in many other cultures because of their domestic and nurturing expectations (Brusco 1995). In fact, it can also be argued that many religious rituals have the massive participation of women because of their reproductive character (see Turner and Seriff 1987). While this may be the case, we propose here that the leadership of women in the MSK is not just religious in character that confirms their reproductive roles.

Looking deeper into their position within the community, women often occupy a domestic and less prominent position than that of men in farming. Ribadeneira (1971: 341) himself observes during the Spanish period that dishonor to Filipino natives "was to feel insulted about their ignorance of cultivating the fields, making good houses and being told they were pusillanimous; above all, that they were impoverished", all indicative of masculine occupations. Women, on the other hand, have a minor role in farming, participating during *pagpag* but for the most part are into weaving and household chores. It is our contention, therefore, that women's active role in the MSK and during the *libot* may be seen in itself as a ritual of role inversion (see Bowie 2006). In religious rituals, women take the lead role as an assertion of their often marginalized subjectivity, which is strategic because they perform

mediating roles with the divine, a significant concern even for men²¹. Hence, we point out here that sensitivity to participation according to gender should be key to a successful engagement with locals.

In our interview with Sister KC, the MSK secretary based in the parish of St. Michael the Archangel, she explains that the main goal of the movement is evangelization which is why organizing novenas, basic orientation seminars or *panayam*, and *damayang kasalan/binyagan* in support of indigents are all part of their regular activities. While they are first and foremost evangelizing communities, MSK units have more or less formalized what used to be less structured arrangements in the conduct of religious rituals in Tayabas. Hence, they are effective units for the preservation and transmission of religious heritage at the grassroots level, complementing the efforts of the main parishes and the local government. In particular, long practiced novenas are officially spearheaded by the MSK, in support of less formally arranged *hermano* system during certain feasts. As mentioned previously, we have met, for example, an MSK officer from Gitnang Lawigue who has the complete *kalipino* for San Diego, San Roque, San Isidro, and St. Michael the Archangel being followed in their *barangay*, articles which may not be readily available elsewhere.

In addition, Sister KC points out that MSK officers are often involved in their respective *barangay* councils. This blurred distinction between political and religious governance may reflect the way locals view community participation – that boundaries are synthetic and community events often expect the involvement of members. This, plus the fact that MSK is wide-reaching, opens up opportunities for effective community-based heritage tourism that may address certain weaknesses we shall identify towards the end.

In studying religious rituals, it was also evident throughout the data-gathering process that emphasis on Catholicism was inevitable because of the wide and deep influence of the religion in Tayabas. Nevertheless, we have also mentioned in this report that there exist several non-Catholic religions and denominations whose participation in religious rituals may not be expected because of faith issues. Jehovah's Witnesses in the *linang* are not expected to participate in the *libot* in the same manner that Protestants are not in the *Hagisan ng Suman* in the *bayan*. Even some Rizalians reject *Hagisan* because of what they see as its excessiveness. Nevertheless, their involvement may still be seen in other areas or celebrations. As the pastor of evangelical church, The Potter's House, admits, they are ready to participate in other avenues. In fact, their effective participation in Tayabas heritage,

²¹ We note, however, that these are insights drawn from the experience of MSK in Silangang Katigan. In other *barangays*, men may be taking lead roles as well.

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especially given the fact that the influence of other religions is widening in Tayabas, is yet to be seen. In other words, instead of seeing them as opposition or "*kontrabida*" as one of our informants puts it, their own contributions may be better harnessed as partners.

Finally, while there are formal organizations behind religious rituals practiced in Tayabas, there are also those less structured but are nevertheless playing equally important roles in the preservation and transmission of religious heritage. Like the formal organizations, these informal systems are community strengths worth affirming. To us outsiders trained in formal structures, always bewildering is how such complex rituals as *Santakrusan* are set up. Indeed, there are assigned individuals such as the *hermanito* and *kabisilya*, adults and youth respectively who oversee *Santakrusan's* different needs. However, the bequeathal of responsibilities seems more traditional, in that roles are already socially expected. Airyn Valdueza, a *kabisilya* we interviewed in Lakawan, admits that it was almost assumed that she will be the leader in the community to organize youth-oriented events and ensure the participation of her peers in the *Santakrusan*. Often it is the incumbent *kabisilya* who will select his/her replacement. The only expectation is that he/she is unmarried, often the young and not yet working. Interestingly, it was because of being in this position that she learned to appreciate the value of the ritual.

Other roles in *Santakrusan* include the *hermano*, *hermana*, *hermanito*, or *hermanita*, adults in the community who more or less act as the committee to assign the different responsibilities covering for the food, music, materials, and decoration such as the *kubol* and *baliskog* needed. Usually, the *mamumuno* is a community elder known to have memorized the *kalipino*. This system is considered informal in the sense that they are often ad hoc and that the community members assume who will take over for the next year. It appears that such informality is highly contingent on the familiarity that community members about the roles they are to take for the ritual, usually depending on such factors as age, gender, and mastery of the event. Hence, young people are not as fully involved as the adults during the ritual but they are socialized into it gradually.

Bayan-Linang Dynamics

The *bayan* or the town proper, which interestingly carries the very name of Tayabas, has become the highlight of Tayabas culture to the outside world. This, of course, is not surprising since even Ribadeneira (1971: 339) sees the establishment of the *pueblo* as the "most important achievement

ever attained by the Franciscans during this period". The *reduccion* was very successful that the *bayan* became the center of governance, economy, and culture.

Today, the *bayan* is where all of Tayabas's grandiose festivals find home, whether it be the *Mayohan Festival*, *Aguyod*²², and *TayTsinoy*²³. We reiterate, however, that to account only for the grandiose to reflect Tayabas culture simply dismisses those that take place at the periphery, which may offer equally noteworthy achievements as far as local cultural heritage is concerned. To a great extent, an underlying assumption of this paper challenges the *bayan's* cultural centeredness. As a matter of fact, albeit occupying a larger area compared to the *bayan*, the *linang*, with around 47 out of 66 *barangays* within the entire municipality to its credit, finds itself tucked in the background of Tayabas culture when it comes to outside audiences. Nevertheless, what remains unseen, though less elaborate than their popular counterparts, are rituals offering an alternative rendition of Tayabas culture and faith. We have seen, for example, the *Santakrusan* and the *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* in the *linang*. Reinforcing the cultural bias being accorded to the *bayan*, so to speak, is the process of urbanization, seen in the numerous infrastructure and establishments in the area. As for the *linang*, much of it remains devoted to agriculture.



The dichotomy evident between the *bayan* and the *linang* appears to be a relevant framework by which to understand and analyze the distinctions among their religious rituals. Here we attempt to offer a socio-geographic framework in identifying strengths and opportunities for community-based heritage tourism.

As a local metaphor, perhaps the *baliskog* is helpful to understand the *bayan-linang* cultural dynamics. As pointed out in the section on crafts, the *baliskog* is meaningfully used as a welcoming arch in various celebrations in Tayabas that range from small birthday events to *barangay*-level *Santakrusan*. And as a main

²² *Aguyod*, literally a Tayabasin term referring to people moving towards a specific location, such as a homecoming and reunion, is an annual Tayabas festival usually celebrated in the latter days of October and usually intersecting with All Souls Day and All Saints Day (1-2 November).

²³ *TayTsinoy*, combining Tayabas and *Tsinoy*, celebrates the cultural diversity present in Tayabas as it acknowledges the Chinese-Filipino heritage present in the community.

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event in the *Mayohan*, the parade of elaborately designed *baliskog* has exalted the cultural artifact to be a prime marker of Tayabas heritage.

As a well decorated welcoming arch, the *baliskog* often represents the openness of Tayabasins, a trait that even the Spanish friars recognized to be "disarming" as they were often "giving tokens and presents to their invited guests" (Ribadeneira 1971: 341). Used in various festivals, the *baliskog* allows for the entry of visitors – including tourists - into the *bayan*.

Implicitly, however, the *baliskog* also sets a limitation as to where the celebration and the openness can only be. Indeed, in the *linang*, where *baliskog* is also used for religious rituals, the openness to outsiders is not very evident. We have seen this exclusivity, so to speak, in two contexts which need elaboration.

Exclusivity in Tayabas Santakrusan

For one, we have indicated in the preliminary report that in contrast to the widespread notion of *Santakrusan* as grand procession (*Flores de Mayo*), the Tayabas *Santakrusan* or *Awit sa Dalit* has substantial levels of exclusivity to the people that live in the *barangay* where the ritual is held. Our own experience has led us to confirm this exclusivity. While doing research, we requested participation in the event with one of our informants who happens to be the organizer of Lakawan's *Santakrusan*. She answered that they still had to confirm with the others if we could take part in the event. It was only two days after when they replied to us, but only with some persistence on our part. During the event, we noticed some degree of awkwardness on the part of the locals. What accounts for this exclusivity?

The two *Santakrusans* may be called by the same name, most likely because of the centrality of the holy cross in both rituals, but their differences which reflect a socio-geographic distinction are noteworthy. On one hand, the *Santakrusan* done in the town proper is celebrated in the streets where they parade in all glamour and grandeur to be seen and admired by the public. Its character makes it one of the major highlights during the *Mayohan* festival. Consistent with the symbolism of the highly decorated *baliskog* in the ritual, the *Santakrusan sa bayan* is an entrypoint to take part in the town's celebrations. That participation however is limited only to the town proper. In the *linang* houses of *hermanas*, on the other hand, the *Awit sa Dalit* is done in the spirit of solemn prayer, and because this is celebrated in the home, only a limited number of people, in particular those of the community, are

expected to take part. In this sense, the socio-geographic distinction between the *bayan* and the *linang* for the two rituals offers space for the assertion of cultural identity.

We make the case that the solemnity of the celebration largely accounts for the feeling of exclusiveness. Drawing from a long history of folk religiosity, the *Santakrusan* has been long practiced as a community event, outside the purview of visitors. This sense of exclusivity results in the protection and preservation of the ritual. Whether conscious or not, this becomes a communal strength that protects what is innate in their own culture and hence their own identity. The nostalgia we sense from those who have transferred to the *bayan* confirms this. Commendable, too, is the positive impact. Undoubtedly, the *Awit sa Dalit* is still doing well in terms of participation at least in some *barangays*.

We are careful not to exaggerate the strength offered by this sense of exclusivity. Time and again, we have encountered *barangays* that no longer practice the *Santakrusan* for such reasons as the demise of the *mamumuno* and the total loss of interest among the younger ones. This failure to transmit the interest and expertise is arguably the other road in the fork of communal exclusivity. In the latter part, we bring up these issues of weaknesses again but suffice it to say for now that they are not necessarily hopeless.

Exclusivity in Paglilibot ng San Isidro

We have also seen the two ways in which the procession of San Isidro is carried out in the *bayan* (*hagisan*) and the *linang* (*bigayan*), respectively. Noticeable is the definite initiative by the locals through the MSK in the *linang* – even without the participation of a priest from the *bayan*. In the *bayan*, we see the grand participation both by the government and the church. Does this socio-geographic distinction²⁴ point to another potential for the cultural heritage of Tayabas worth pursuing?

Based on our observations, the economic conditions in both spaces are fundamental to the distinction. The economic centrality of the urbanizing town proper allows for affluence. Hence, it is not surprising that according to Willy Tomines, Community Affairs Officer, the *suman* used in the fiesta in the *bayan* are outsourced from the *linang*. As they are outsourced, lavishness in the form of *hagisan*

²⁴ As in the previous discussion, we reiterate here that the socio-geographic distinction is better understood as a generality. According to our interviews, many *barangays* adopted the procession from the *bayan* but have, along the way, modified the act of distributing the *suman*. Others maintain the practice of *hagisan* but arguably in a way that minimizes wastage.

seems plausible. The *suman* being tossed by the locals is free for anyone to catch. Considered spoilt are those uncaught and one need not be remorseful about the waste.

In the *linang*, on the other hand, a more solemn approach is taken. As we have seen, the whole procession is considered by many not just as an act of gratitude but also as an act of *penitensiya* because of the effort involved in traversing the whole rural *barangay*. At least for us participant observers, it was very challenging, to say the least, to cross the muddy ricefield. Some of the participants have indicated that the procession makes them stronger in fact since joining the ritual is a feat in itself, which can take at least two hours to complete.

Making the ritual in the *linang* most meaningful, however, is the very act of *pagbibigay* or handing over the *suman* for everyone to share. Given the economic limitation in the rural, there is no space for waste that is quite natural in *Hagisan ng Suman*.

But even more important than the economic backdrop of these rituals in the *bayan* and the *linang*, we see that in the latter, the close interpersonal relationships existing among the members of the *barangay* appear to be both the driving force and the beneficiary of the ritual. The sense of community, for example, is present among the people as they always try to convince their fellows to join them in the procession of their saint. Each household visited then joins in the procession. This level of intimacy stands in contrast to the inclusive nature of *Hagisan ng Suman* in the *bayan* where even outsiders are most welcome to participate.

Might this be an attempt to cherish the relationships in the *linang*? We argue so. In fact, like the *Awit sa Dalit*, the *Bigayan ng suman* as part of the feast of San Isidro in the *linang* is another solemn source of cultural identity for the Tayabasin that must be cherished and respected.

Exclusivity Qualified

The sense of exclusivity in the *linang* must not be interpreted as in total opposition to the practices in the *bayan*. It is, as we have observed, a general condition that is worth highlighting especially to recognize how cultural identity is maintained by communities in the *linang*. However, as we immersed ourselves more in the religious rituals of Tayabas, we realized that attempts at community integration are also present in the *bayan* and that the relationship between the *bayan* and the *linang* in terms of the practice of religious rituals can be better understood.

We want to affirm here, for example, what Necias Pataunia and Mayor Dondi Silang have pointed out as the main goal of the *Mayohan* Festival. In contrast to the *Aguyod* Festival and *TayTsinoy* which are both mainly catered for tourists, the *Mayohan's* main goal is the participation and celebration of different *barangays* in Tayabas. It is instructive to recall that the recent history of conflict in Tayabas serves as the backdrop for the attempts at city-wide celebrations. Given this grand attempt, it is not surprising therefore to be hearing remarks from our interviewees about the *Mayohan* Festival's excessiveness. Others, however, feel that there is not enough participation from the *linang* and that it is not competitive enough to attract attention from outsiders as well, especially if contrasted with the *Pahiyas* Festival.

Nevertheless, we see two examples of existing structures showcasing the participation of communities especially in the *linang*. For one, as we have mentioned, the majority of the *suman* being used in the *Hagisan* in the *bayan* are being produced by locals in the *linang*. An estimation tells us that about 100,000 *suman* were distributed during the *Hagisan* this year. Second, we also found out that, according to informants in the *linang* and contrary to our expectations, they have adopted the *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* from its practice in the *bayan* but modified them accordingly, as indicated above. The *bayan*, indeed, plays an important role in nurturing a cultural identity for Tayabas which locals in the *linang* are not always resistant to.

Another example is that, apart from the May 15 celebrations, Silangang Katigan also commemorates the feast on another separate date and relives the same *suman* rituals. It is because, according to one of our informants, they would like to have a celebration in which they can enjoy it among themselves without the urgency of participating in the one in *bayan*. According to them, May 15 is dedicated to the ritual of offering *suman* to San Isidro while the 25th is for the celebration of the feast of the same.

Efforts like this point to the possibility of better and more creative involvement from the *linang* as they have considerable levels of openness, after all. Key is utilizing their strengths, as the production of *suman* tells us, for example. Undeniably, this reflection extends beyond religious rituals. We are familiar, for example, of growing interests in the revitalization of a weaving industry in Tayabas.

Insights from Exclusivity

Drawing from the two experiences of exclusivity with *Santakrusan* and *Paglilibot ng San Isidro*, we argue that there are existing structures that are both community-based and strategic for heritage preservation and transmission. While it is true that religious rituals may be threatened as society undergoes changes (in the form of physical and social mobility which we have seen in Tayabas), it is both instructive and encouraging that cultural preservation is socially available. This certainly parallels the efforts of some Australian Aboriginal groups that, while making use of their innate - and in fact, sacred - skill in painting for commercial purposes, they maintain the sanctity of their works by defining which objects are "made for sale and not for their own ritual or practical use" (Myers 1995: 5). This they do by making use of acrylic paintings on canvas, which is a new form to them relative to their traditional works which are maintained for exclusive ritual purposes. Nevertheless, even if new paintings are for commercial purposes, they similarly derive from narratives about mythical beings called Dreamings, which are exclusively transmitted through kinship. This is why their paintings are valuable to international consumers. We learn from this that some Australian Aborigines, who are well familiar with the threat to their cultural existence brought about by their society's modern condition, have developed ways to benefit from the social change while at the same time asserting the sanctity of their practices, and in so doing, their identity.

In light of this sense of exclusivity in Tayabas religious rituals, this paper puts forward two important concerns for community-based heritage tourism.

One, the big festivals including the *Mayohan* are significant efforts towards both making a name for Tayabas as a lively destination and eliciting the greater participation of the different *barangays*. We know, for instance, that the *Parada ng Baliskog* is mainly dependent on the involvement of different *barangays* in the *linang* and that the raw materials to decorate houses in Munting Bayan come



from the *linang* as well (see photo). We also know that for the *Hagisan ng Suman*, the vast majority of *suman* used is produced in the *linang*. Among many others, these efforts are already existing and perhaps it is desirable to highlight the involvement of *barangays* in the celebrations in the *linang*. Making the participation of *barangays* the central character of celebrations in the *bayan* will recognize the identity of Tayabas as a community at large.

Two, the exclusivity of religious rituals in the *linang* must be upheld and recognized as well. Having discovered, for example, both *Santakrusan* and *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* as rituals that have become very localized in certain *barangays*, we must acknowledge them as part of the religious heritage of Tayabas. Similar to what we have done in this report, these supposedly marginal rituals can be recognized in official documents or studies about religious heritage in Tayabas.

But whether they can be opened up for greater participation by outsiders is an important question to consider. At the rate, it might be logical to argue to let these rituals proceed as they are – out of respect for their exclusivity. After all, they are still vibrantly practiced – even among the youth – in several *barangays*. But we also know that participation in them is dwindling in other contexts, especially because elders who have mastered the ritual are passing on. In these contexts, perhaps, community efforts may be revived. Queaño (1985), for example, points out that there used to be widely attended gatherings among different *mamumunos* who competed for a perfect rendition of the *Awit sa Dalit*. Furthermore, in our experience joining the *Paglilibot ng San Isidro*, we found out that outsiders like us were free to participate with them – and this may have been so because we had a local contact. In fact, in our succeeding visit, we were reminded to join them again next year.

In sum, we believe that these religious rituals offer incomparable experiences of the depth of the religious heritage in Tayabas – that other locals and even outsiders can benefit from as well. As one of our team members puts it after having witnessed the *Santakrusan*, "*nang mapanuod ko ang ritwal ng Awit sa Dalit nasabi ko sa aking sarili na may ipagmamalaki ko na isa nga akong Pilipino*". The key to their preservation and transmission necessarily lies in their recurrence but ideally in a way that upholds their meaningfulness for the locals – and not in commodifying them as "exotic" culture. How *Santakrusan* and *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* (and other religious rituals in the *linang* for that matter) may be engaged with effectively necessitates a dialogue with locals. The point is: We find it instructive and encouraging that locals can open their doors for us – whether in entrusting their very old *kalipino* for us to photoduplicate, in showing us their antique *poon* to photograph, in accompanying us to visit *erehiya*, in answering our questions, or in allowing us to join and record their religious rituals.

V. Concerns and Propositions

This chapter ends by bringing up some weaknesses or concerns related to the preservation of religious heritage in Tayabas. These are observations we have gathered quite informally as we made our rounds of interviews. While they have been raised as concerns here, we also offer some opportunities to address them in light of the community structures discussed in the previous section.

One of the most important yet ironically often neglected areas in heritage preservation is material religion or those artifacts used in rituals. Proof here is the perennial undermaintenance of church museums in the Philippines, often explained by drained financial resources. The concern is heightened in places like Tayabas where a diversity of religious rituals is present. How do we preserve



thus demand special handling.

The stone crosses (see photo) originally used for *Santakrusan* are being threatened by antique collectors or even other opportunists, according to some interviewees. Apparently, there are collectors visiting households intermittently and locals who do not see the value of these stone crosses are easily convinced.

material religion that is practically everywhere in the community but is gravely threatened by deterioration, opportunists, and increasing inability to take care of? During our data-gathering, we have seen how such material religion as stone crosses, *poon*, religious painting, and even the *kalipino* are all ageing without proper care that should assure their conservation and continued use, if still possible. Most frustrating for us, perhaps, is the fact that very old handwritten *kalipinos* are being thrown away indiscreetly, usually after the owner dies. The typical explanation is that they will not be used anymore and nobody is there to perform them anyway. Those that remain, like the ones we have managed to borrow for photoduplication, have been worn out by time and



To this one may also include antique *poon*. Traditionally, according to locals, images are passed on to the next generation within the family although in some cases, like the painting of San Isidro from Alitao, they can be inherited by other community members. The problem, however, is that many others do not transfer hands in time for unknown reasons while those that remain deterioriate and locals are equipped to preserve them.

Apart from material religion, the concern for religious transmission is increasingly evident. Queaño (1985), a local Tayabasin who carried out his research more than two decades ago, already observed the decline in the practice of *Santakrusan* for reasons such as the waning interest among the youth. In addition to this, we found out that there are also historical contingencies. In Alitao, for example, a conscious effort to replace *Santakrusan* with *Paglilibot ng San Isidro* was done since locals wanted a religious devotion directly related to their agricultural condition.

While in some cases like in Lakawan, youth participation is still vibrant, we need to point out as well that the degree of religious socialization among the youth needs to be taken into consideration. This is more so with regards to the mastery of such elaborate rituals as *Santakrusan*. In contrast, the degree of religious socialization among the elders who have mastered the *kalipino* was very high.

Nevertheless, we make the case that as the younger community members are involved in the ritual preparation and practice, their interest may be revitalized. In fact, the *Santakrusan kabisilya* we interviewed (see photo) admits to us that she sees herself continuing the tradition because of such exposure, which she did not take seriously prior to her appointment. We draw this insight from the experience of the women who spearhead the *Paglilibot* in Silangang Katigan. A very instructive dialectic is evident here: their sustained leadership ensures the continuous practice of *Santakrusan*, which in turn, effectively recognizes their presence and importance in the community. In organizational sociology, commitment



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to a community is often more emphasized as members are given spaces to voice out their opinions and share their own contributions (Hirschman 1970). In contrast, suppression of voice leads to exit of membership. Learning from this insight can lead to a better engagement with the community youth.

In light of opportunities discussed in the previous section, these concerns are not entirely bleak. A strategic intervention lies in the effective engagement that local tourism organizers or the local government can pull off with the existing community structures we have identified above.

Most promising, we suggest, is the *Munting Sambayang Kristiyano* (MSK), which as explained above, has become the formal entity that spearheads the practice of religious rituals in *barangays*. As such, the MSK can effectively serve as a community organization that looks after such available material religion as the *poon* and *kalipino*. Partnership with local government entities or even the parishes may be encouraged to systematically document and account for the presence of these artifacts.

In line with the propositions made elsewhere in this report, the presence of a community-organized heritage library or museum can act as a depository of the aforementioned documentation of religious artifacts. Evidently, the same can house the collection of delicate religious artifacts from the different *barangays*, but not neglecting their own local histories which future Tayabasins can read about.

In addition, the library or museum may record the presence of religious archives in other settings. This report has attempted to document available materials of interest from a fairly recent thesis on *Santakrusan* from the University of the Philippines to an 1821 San Diego novena in the Rizal Library of the Ateneo de Manila University. What this proposition simply underscores is that there is a need for a centralized mechanism that documents, accounts for, and if possible, shelters the religious heritage of Tayabas.

A quick qualifier: the thoughts about engagement with the local community proposed here need systematic evaluation through practice. If there is one point that we hope we have emphasized in this paper, it is not just the documentation of religious rituals in Tayabas. Reflecting the ideals of community-based heritage tourism, the paper highlights the importance of engagement with locals. In so doing, their aspirations and existing activities may be recognized and new possibilities explored. It is our hope, from here, that the religious heritage of Tayabas, which is one of the decisive markers of its cultural identity, remains valued and intact.

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